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ALLAHABAD

BY DESERT WAYS TO BAGHDAD

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NOTE.

THIS abridged edition of "By Desert Ways to Baghdad" has been prepared under the supervision of the author.

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BY DESERT WAYS TO BAGHDAD.

CHAPTER I.

THE START.

IT was our first night in camp: little mysterious hillocks shut us in to a world of our own; we had it all to ourselves; only the stars overhead knew, and they seemed to be congratulating us on our escape; they twinkled and winked and beckoned. Constantin, our Greek cook, had lit a fire, and this at once became the centre of our world. The door of our tent looked out on it, the muleteers, the Zaptiehs (escorts), and our men sat round it, our supper was cooking on it; the horses and mules, tethered in a semicircle, turned that way and blinked at it; far away a jackal saw it and barked. It drew us all together, and its smoke went quietly up towards the beckoning stars.

It was very quiet; the men spoke in under-

tones, and the fire crackled in the cool, still air. Constantin lifted the pot off the fire. He ladled the onions and rice on to two plates and picked out the bits of mutton, then after handing us the plates he began to beat up eggs for an omelette.

We had been stretched out on the ground, we drew ourselves up, and sitting cross legged, balanced the plates on our knees. The food tasted excellent, although it had been cooked in one pot. Constantin had wanted to bring three pots, he had been camp cook to the best people on hunting expeditions who had three courses for dinner, with clean plates and knives for each course. He looked the part his clothes were European, except for the fez. We had had a scene with him before leaving Constantinople: he had accumulated a large assortment of saucepans and kettles, of pans for frying and pans for stewing, of pots for boiling and pots for washing. We had gone through them critically, and had discarded everything but a stew pan, a frying pan, and one pot for boiling water. Constantin was in despair, but we were adamant, we wished to travel light, and to live largely on native food.

As it was we had a cart loaded up with our belongings: there were the two tents for our-

selves and the men, our camp beds and sacks of clothes, and the cooking utensils. It all seemed a great deal, and yet we were only taking necessities. Life was becoming extraordinarily easy, for we had left behind most things and forgotten all the injunctions and warnings of our friends.

It was getting very dark ; we could no longer see the hillocks, we could hardly see the horses tethered beyond the fire, but we could hear them munching and stamping, and now and then one would neigh suddenly.

Constantin lit a lantern and hung it on a stick ; then he washed up the dishes. The other men sat on by the fire, and we looked through the smoke at them. There was Calphopolos. Now Calphopolos was a Greek, and he was a mistake. His unbrushed black clothes contrasted painfully with the native dress, especially when seen through the smoke of a camp fire. He always carried about a little black handbag, out of which his toothbrush was constantly falling. But his worst offence was that he spoke a language which we understood, and jabbered French at us from morning to night. He was in the employment of well-meaning friends, whom he accompanied when they made business excursions into the interior. They had sent him to start us comfortably on the way.

Then there was Ibrahim, a lang, lean Turk with a smiling face. He put up the tents and rode in attendance upon us, and haggled with the villagers over mulk and eggs. They had told me that Ibrahim was troubled in his mind. "never before had a waman looked him straight in the face and shawn him a watch." Two Eastern precepts had been violated, and I had been the unwitting offender. It was at Brusa, which we had left with such difficulty that morning. We had arranged the night before to start at eight o'clock. But eight came, and half past eight came, and nine came, and then the Zaptiehs came who were to have come at eight to escort us on the way, but there was no sign of our own retinue—of Constantin, of Ibrahim, of our own hired horses, of the cart and muleteers with the baggage.

The news of our departure had got about, and the people of the hotel gradually collected at the door. "Where is your dragoman?" they said, "why do you not send for him?" We confessed to having engaged no dragoman. "No dragoman! that was very rash. We could speak the language, then?" No, we had only a Turkish dictionary. They gave us up then as hopeless. Another individual pushed his way up to us. You will never get your men to

start or do anything else," he said; "you do not realise what these Turks are."

I recognised him as a professional dragoman offered to us by Cook the week before. But he was only telling us what everybody else out of the trade had been dinning into our ears ever since we planned the journey.

I repaired to the inn where the men and horses had been collected the night before. In the open yard stood the cart, empty and horseless. Constantin sat on a roll of baggage near by, with a resigned expression, as if he had been sitting there for hours. Ibrahim stood in the stable door, smoking complacently, and our muleteers were squabbling violently over the roping of a box.

It was at this moment that I stepped up to Ibrahim and showed him my watch. He looked at me with a startled expression, his jaw dropped, and he turned hastily on the muleteers. But it was not till later that I learnt how his inmost susceptibilities had been roused. One is at a decided disadvantage with no knowledge of the language, but by dint of gesticulating with my riding-whip and pointing at everybody in turn, I managed, at the end of another half-hour, to get the cart and the men under way, and mounting my own horse, rode behind them to the hotel.

In another five minutes we had sallied out on our road. X and I rode ahead with Ibrahim and Calphopolos and the two Ziptichis, then came the cart with our baggage and the muleteers, then Constantin, with bulging saddle bags suggesting the intrusion of various forbidden cooking utensils.

Our road ran unshaded and dusty through the outskirts of Brusa. Bit by bit we left behind the staring tourists, the staring native children, the unconcerned stallkeepers displaying their wares. Then we passed the country people riding in on mules with their vegetables and chickens, we passed the little cultivated patches, and got amongst the larger fields stretching away on each side of the road.

The day got hotter and the road got dustier. At midday we skirted a willow plantation, and a stream gurgled through the damp green patch, inviting us to come in and rest. We crawled out of the sun under the low willow bushes, and the men tied the horses to the stronger branches. This first lunching place will always remain imprinted on my memory: the slices of brown bread thickly spread with solid cream; the water melons and the grapes, the men grouped about among the willows, eating great hunches of bread and cheese, the horses breaking loose

and straying about, browsing the finer herbage which sprang up through the dried and yellow tufts of older grass; the joy of being out of the sun and the dust; the cool sound of the water in the brook; the sense of rest and freedom, the sense of having really escaped at last.

Then we had reluctantly left it all; the unwilling horses were pulled and dragged away, snatching at last bites; and we rode off on the dusty road again, until we reached the village near which we had arranged to camp.

We were destined to spend many more such nights in camp; but perhaps none can give you exactly the same thrill as the one on which for the first time you sleep out in the open. It is full of surprises: you expect it to be quiet, and you find the darkness and stillness is full of noise. Nothing escapes you—the breathing of men and animals, the crackling of the fire, the rustling of leaves and grass: there seems to be a continuous movement very close to you. You sit up many times, expecting to see something in your tent; it all makes you very wakeful. You drop off into a disturbed sleep very late, and are awakened before sunrise by the stir in the camp. You are positive you have not slept all night, and that strange people have been prowling round you in the dark.

CHAPTER II

BRIGANDAGE.

CAPTURE for ransom is a decided danger in the neighbourhood of larger towns in Asiatic Turkey. Not that there are any professional brigands prowling about, but there is a certain class of native ready to become brigands on the spur of the moment, should they get wind of suitable prey. They are not Turks—no Turk would be bothered; they are, as a rule, Greeks. It is as well, therefore, on any expedition, to make very great preparations and talk a great deal of your route; but as quietly and conditionally as possible to get hold of your baggage and men and start off before news of your movements has been noised abroad.

Calphopulos had been sent with us partly because he could be so thoroughly trusted to take all precautions. He certainly earned his reputation: he seemed to have been born with the fear of brigands in his soul; mere conversation about them caused him to break out into a

profuse perspiration. He had talked to us very seriously on leaving Constantinople, as we sat on the deck of the steamer which took us across the Sea of Marmora on our way to Brusa.

"Above all things, ladies, be secret: secrecy is everything."

"Secrecy" became his byword. If there was one thing he was more afraid of than anything else on earth it was X's surname. He implored her not to use it, but to call herself Miss Victoria. He had all our luggage labelled "Miss Victoria;" and if in casual conversation the dreaded name leaked out, beads of perspiration rolled down his face, and he would glance nervously round to see who was within ear-shot.

X was rather a reprobate on the subject. On our arrival at the hotel at Brusa, whence we were to make our final departure, she marched up to the landlady and said, "I think you know my uncle"—mentioning him by name. Calphopolos, who was just behind, explaining that our name was Victoria pure and simple, turned green with horror. With bent back and staring eyes, shaking his finger in warning, he endeavoured to attract X's attention from behind the landlady's broad back. But X went glibly on, quite oblivious of the panic she was creating.

Calphopolos turned to me with the resigned expression of a man on whom death sentence has been passed. "It is all over now," he said: "everybody in Brusa will know about us in half an hour. Ladies, did I not implore you above all things to respect the secrecy?"

Then poor old Calphopolos, who was not without his sense of fun, laughed till the tears rolled down his cheeks. "The only thing left to do," he went on, when he had sufficiently recovered to speak again, "is to pretend we are going to Angora and put them off the scent. Please try and remember that it is Angora you are going to. Tell everybody you are going to Angora. The secrecy, it is everything."

It must be confessed it was very difficult at that time to feel seriously alarmed about brigandage, for we seemed to be moving in ordinary respectable society, and Calphopolos's treatment of the subject merely caused us to think of it as a joke. Still, we fully realised that it was a real risk, against which it would not do to neglect taking ordinary precautions, and this sense was heightened by the extreme alarm of the Vice-Consul at Brusa, to whom we applied for the escort of Zaptiehs, without whom one cannot travel in Turkey with any guarantee of safety. He could not understand why we would not

drive through to Nicæa in a landau in one day, like the ordinary tourist; this, with a suitable escort, made the journey quite safe, and it is a common thing for travellers to do. But to ride there in three days with our camp, sleeping on the way, was another matter. Every extra hour spent loitering in any one district heightened the risk of being attacked by brigands. X tried to explain that it was for the sake of her health, which only made him more bewildered; surely a landau was more suitable for invalids!

Finding us, however, unmoved by his arguments, he promised to send us two men the next morning, and implored us never to leave their sides for a moment. He must have rubbed the same instructions well into the Zaptiehs, for during the seven days in which they accompanied us as far as Mekidje on the Anatolian Railway, they never were more than a couple of yards away from us, day and night.

The second day our road lay across the great Jenishehr plain. Herds of buffaloes strayed about on the wilder parts, and here and there fields of corn and tobacco, suddenly springing up beside the stretches of rough grass, signalled the approach to a village.

Here also it was very difficult to think of

brigands; the landless look of peaceful cultivators did not suggest them. Besides which the country was so open that you could not be suddenly surprised upon; you would have ample opportunity of considering evil-doers as they approached you across the wide plain.

We encamped that evening near the small village of Jenishahr. The excitement of the novelty had worn off, and we had had a long day in the open air. In consequence of this I had fallen into a profound sleep at once on going to bed. Suddenly I was awakened by a noise in the tent, and looking up I distinctly saw the figure of a man coming cautiously through the tent door. In one moment I had hold of my revolver, which I kept loaded at the head of my bed, and had it levelled at him, wondering when the moment for pulling the trigger would occur and whether I should manage to live up to its requirements.

"For heaven's sake, madame! for heaven's sake!" came in a terror-stricken voice.

I put down the weapon rather crossly.

"What do you want?" I said.

"What are your names?" stuttered out Calphopolos in great agitation.

"What on earth do you mean?" I said; "you know our names well enough."

"For heaven's sake! what are your names?" he repeated.

"X," I called out, "wake up and tell me what is the matter with Calphopolos. I think his head has been turned by this fright about your name; he is going about jibbering over it."

X had a soothing influence on Calphopolos, and gradually extracted from him that the local Zaptieh had come up for our passports and wanted to know our names. His agitation over the revolver had been so great that he had been unable to explain articulately that it was our passports that he had come for.

The next day the whole character of the country altered. The plain gradually changed into a more rugged country and cultivation disappeared. We were about to cross the range of hills which shut out our view to the north.

The Zaptiehs were very much on the alert here; they unslung their rifles and rode with them across their knees. We were told to keep close together and ride quietly without talking.

The mountains closed in on either side; they were bare, rounded hills for the most part, with stunted shrubs on the lower slopes, which one soon learnt to regard as cover for an enemy. There was no difficulty about realising possible dangers here: the road slowly narrowed, and at every

turn in the winding path one almost expected to be confronted by a villain. At the snap of a twig or the rustle of a leaf our Zaptiehs grasped their rifles tighter, and, without turning their heads moved their eyes in that direction. Once, on the wider road we had left, a cloud of dust had arisen in the distance, and a long line of camels laden with wood filed slowly past us in twos and threes. Our men exchanged a few words with the drivers and in another minute or two the tinkling of the bells and the tramp of feet had subsided the dust settled once more, and we were alone again with the silent hills and the crackling twigs, and wound our way in single file between the rounded hillocks. Here and there the sight of a herd of sheep or goats tended by peaceful looking natives relieved the tension caused by our escort's precautions, for it is always difficult to associate danger with such rural scenes. At last there was a break in front, we were through the pass and began to descend.

Calphopolos had been silent all this time, his conversational powers seemed to have suffered a severe check. Now he brightened up, mopped his forehead and murmured, "Thank heaven! We are here!"

Half way down the hillside, perched on a projecting ledge just off the road, stood a lonely

coffee-house. The Zaptiehs, pointing at it with their whips, hailed it with delight. They slid off their horses, and holding ours, helped us to dismount. We sat in the porch and sipped thick, hot Turkish coffee; below us a lake lay like a blue sheet between the purple hills, its eastern end fringed round with a band of green, in which the minarets and domes of Isnik were just visible. All around us the stunted shrubs still formed harbour for suspected brigands. Our Zaptiehs lay stretched on the ground in front, apparently asleep; but their rifles were never laid aside, and the least stir in the bushes made us realise their state of alert watchfulness.

But not a living creature showed itself, and we rode on down the curving incline until we reached the green band of vegetation and our horses trod softly through grassy slopes of olive plantations, whose gray leaves shone like silver as the sun's low rays beat through them. Past the olive plantations lay a stretch of low-lying reedy marsh.

"You shall have a good supper to-night," said Ibrahim; and throwing his reins to a Zaptieh, he plunged in on foot. He shot two snipe, and joined us again as we reached the outskirts of the town.

The old city of Nicæa is now represented by a collection of a few hundred miserable houses forming the village of Isnik. But, as everywhere in the ancient towns of Asiatic Turkey, one is confronted at every point with tokens of former splendour. Four great gates in the old Roman walls give access to the town. Courses of brick work are built in between the large stones of which the bulk of the walls consists, here and there semicircular towers rise up, their ruins still surmounting the ruins of the wall.

We fixed on a spot for the camp just inside the walls and outside the present town, where a green field, which merged into a cemetery, lay in the curve of a shallow brook.

The pots and pans were speedily tumbled out of Constantin's saddle-bags, and Ibrahim had our tents up with European alacrity, but it was dark before the smell of roasted snipe pervaded the night air. We ate our supper by the light of a lantern hung on a forked stick. The fear of brigands departed, and sleep fell upon the camp. Owls booted in the green covered walls of ruined Nicæa, and away in the distance the still mountains kept guard over the dark waters of the lake as they lapped mournfully on the ruins of Roman baths on its stony shore. The Zaptieh on guard poked fresh sticks into the

dying fire and sighed heavily between the snores of his companions. In and out amongst the upright white stones of the cemetery a jackal prowled stealthily and sniffed the smell of snipe bones.

CHAPTER III

WE MAKE FRIENDS

ONE tree stood out in the middle of the field in which we were encamped. We spread our carpet under it and prepared for a lazy day. There were letters to write home and plans to make about the journey ahead. It was impossible to do such things comfortably after a day's ride, so we had decided to spend this Sunday at Isnik.

Constantin got out all his pots and pans to give them an extra cleaning, and promised us a vast meal. He complained that he had never had time to show us what he could do.

Animals and men alike were pervaded with that sense of rest which is in the air on a hot Sunday morning. The horses, after rolling on their backs, stretched themselves out motionless on their sides, the drivers dozed in the cart. Calphopolos retired inside the men's tent, prepared to make up for the loss of sleep occasioned by anxious nights. We got out our books and

papers and thought about all we should get through that day

We were encamped within the old walls of Nicæa, and from where we sat were in full view of the outskirts of the present town. By and by some native women sallied out, and skirting the camp, peeped cautiously round our tents, then, getting bolder, they sidled towards us, smiling propitiatingly. We felt peacefully disposed towards the whole world, and smiled back at them. Thus encouraged they advanced nearer, and felt our clothes and examined our hats.

Finally, not finding themselves repulsed, they fingered our hair and stroked our hands. Meanwhile other women straggled out from the town, and finding their sisters already so much at home, they also satisfied themselves as to the consistency of our clothes and skin. The earlier arrivals now seated themselves on the ground around us, jabbering away amongst themselves and occasionally addressing a single word to us, which they repeated again and again, pointing at each of us in turn. X looked it up in her dictionary, and came to the conclusion that it meant "sister." So we shook our heads and looked up the word for "friend." The effect was magical, we had established social intercourse. Soon everybody had a word they wanted

looked out in the dictionary, until X became fairly exhausted. We tried "good-bye" and "no more" with disappointing effect, and finally let them sit there gazing at us while we went on with our writing, keeping a sharp lookout on our hats, which every one was anxious to try on. It seemed to please them just as much to look at us as to talk to us, and they sat on in placid content.

By-and-by Ibrahim hurried up and spoke to the women; they all darted to their feet and fled. We looked at Ibrahim inquiringly. He pointed in the direction of the town, and we saw two men arriving at a slow and dignified pace. Constantin appeared on the scene.

"The Governor," he said, "to pay a visit."

X and I hastily donned our hats and sent for a seat for the Governor. But Ibrahim could only find a saddle-bag. X turned over the leaves of the dictionary, in the hope of finding suitable greetings. We bowed and scraped, and X delivered herself of the first greeting.

"We are very pleased."

The Governor bowed and made, no doubt, what was a suitable response; but as we could only attack single words we were no wiser. There was a pause while X collected the words for another attempt.

"Beautiful country," she murmured

The Governor bowed very gravely

"I hope I have said that," said X nervously ;
 "he looks rather shocked"

At that moment Constantin appeared with coffee and cigarettes, which gave us time to recover

"I should not bother to talk to him," I said
 "That is the best of these people they understand how to sit happily in silence, just looking at you"

But X determined to make another try, it was good practice

"Health good?" she said

The Governor turned to his companion and said a few words in Turkish The young man looked rather terrified, and began to speak to us in what sounded like gibberish Constantin came to take the cups away

"He is speaking French," he said, pointing to the young man

We strained our ears to try and catch an intelligible word, but could only shake our heads

So we all took refuge in silence and looked at one another There was no sense of weariness The Turk and his companion seemed as content to sit and look at us as the women had been When he had finished his cigarette he rose, and,

bowing once more in Turkish fashion, took his leave.

We picked up our papers once more; then Constantin came and said lunch was ready. We sat on saddle-bags outside the tent and ate chunks of mutton and onions out of the tin bowl which was kept hot on the charcoal brazier at our side. Ibrahim filled our cups with water from the brook, and the grass tickled our hands each time we lifted them from the ground. The pots and pans lay all around, and Constantin, squatting in the middle of them, brought the coffee to the boil three times in the little Turkish pot.

Then we returned to the carpet under the tree and sipped the thick, hot coffee out of the little Turkish cups. And we thought of the coffee they were drinking in the drawing-rooms at home: the little cups there would have handles, and each person would help himself to sugar off a little tray.

A French engineer with his wife and family then appeared on the scene. They were the only Europeans living in the place, and rejoiced over the sound of their mother-tongue. The man poured out volumes of it, and was interesting about his work up to the point when we became fatigued.

“Ah, mademoiselle! what it is to be in

civilised company again! We live here from day to day and year after year, and have no one to speak with, no one with whom to exchange ideas ”

Do you not see anything of the natives ? ” we inquired ‘ They seem very friendly, and you can speak Turkish ’ ”

Ah, mademoiselle ! what can one do with such people ? how can one associate with them ? ”

We were talking to some of them,” we said, and thought them very intelligent

He held up his hands in horror

But, mademoiselle, do you not understand ? Certainly there are the Christian races, but for the most part they are Turks—infidels—dogs There is Marie there, poor Marie ! It is bad enough for me, but then I have my work But Marie, she dies of weariness, she can speak to no one but me and the children ’

Poor Marie seemed indeed to have lost the power of speech, she sat silent as her husband poured out his contempt of the natives

We had found the Greek women very entertaining in the morning, and they too had sat and looked at us in silence But they had not been ashamed of their silence, Marie was, and felt awkward, so we all felt uncomfortable, and tried to talk to her

One felt then how little actual language had to do with social intercourse. We could not get into touch with Marie, whose language we understood, in the same way that we had got into touch with the native women, whose language we did not understand.

They sat on and on ; it was not until the sun began to send out long warning shoots of colour, heralding its disappearance behind the purple mountains, that they rose to go.

And we, worn out with this final effort in sociability, gave ourselves up to the quiet of the deserted camp, and watched the shades of night creep once more over the ruined walls and the distant hills.

CHAPTER IV

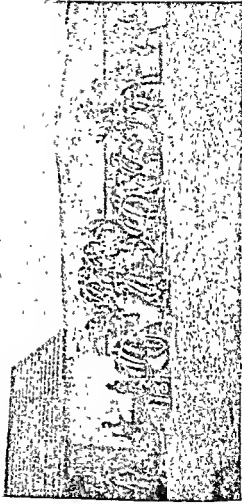
THE DAWN OF THE BAGDAD RAILWAY.

THERE is something very weird and uncanny in the terminus of a railway in the middle of a wild and desolate country. The Monster runs his iron fangs into the heart of its desolation and shoots you into it like a ball out of a cannon's mouth. Roaring and hissing and sending out jets of flame, he comes racing through the darkness to a certain definite spot, then he discharges you into the blackness of night. Next morning when you awake he is gone, and you are left to shift for yourself as best you can. But there is a certain human friendliness about this Monster while you are travelling with him. He seems to draw all the signs of life out of an apparently dead country and collect them at the stations for you to see. Great warehouses filled with sacks of corn testify to the productive ness of a country which, judging it from the train window after harvest time, one would dismiss as mere barren soil. Native carts hanging about,

and truck-loads of empty sacks, tell the same tale. Groups of peasants idly gossiping, gathered together by the whistle which heralds the Monster's approach, belie the impression of an uninhabited land; for Turkish villages are carefully designed so as not to attract attention. When one's eye gets more familiar with the seemingly uniform colour of the landscape, varied only by light and shade, one becomes aware of the low, flat-topped, mud-brick houses, which, even at close quarters, often seem but part of the natural rock.

Already we could see what a power the East has to reckon with in the railway. For one thing, it attacks the Eastern in one of his vital points—his conception of Time. Time waited for him when he had but camels to load; but the railway will not wait for him; the Monster screeches and is off. Sunrise or two hours after sunrise is not one and the same thing to him. Relentless as day and night he comes and goes, and there is no cheating him as the Eastern cheats Time.

But the railway is cheating the East out of its time-worn customs and ideas, and there is a certain sadness in the evidences of transition. All down the line picturesque native costumes are being replaced by ugly European clothes. The men wear terrible fancy trouserings from



CAMELS AT MEKIDJE STATION.

Manchester; the women spend more money on dress—and unfortunately it is European dress—and less on the old-fashioned wedding feasts. The bazaars are now a medley of stalls exhibiting native manufactures side by side with cheap trinkets from England and loud flannelettes from Italy. The price of wheat has doubled, and with that of wheat the prices of other exports have also risen. Opium, wool, mohair, hides, and salt are amongst the products of these great plains.

Two short days' ride from Nicæa had brought us to Mekidje, a station on the Anatolian Railway. The single line went as far as Konia, and one train ran each way every day. It stopped for the night at Eskishehr, continuing the journey next morning.

We arrived at the station some hours before the train was due, and sat in the stationmaster's strip of garden, for there did not seem anything else to do. We said good-bye to the Zaptiehs and to the muleteers, who were returning to Brusa, and watched them slowly disappear down the road by which we had come. Then we heard the low, familiar tinkle of camel bells, and a score or more of laden animals paced slowly into the open ground round the station. They have a more discreet and tuneful way of

their arrival than the Monster, and when they appear on the scene they do so in a more dignified calmer manner. Having arrived, they do not look as if they were going to be off again the next minute, they look as if they had come to stay for ever, and they give you time to think. One by one, in answer to a word of command, they knelt down in the dust, and great baskets holding the goods were unfastened, and rolled about on the ground. Their owners seemed too slack to do any more. They let them lie there while they looked at the sun. The Monster is slowly replacing these carriers of the East, but their day is not yet done by a long way, for they must feed him from the interior.

At last we heard his distant shriek. Down upon us he came, dashing up all in a minute, in such a splutter and such a hurry, waking us all up. Officials rushed up and down the platform, and swore at the natives who were loading our baggage. Everybody talked at once to everybody else.

The Monster is getting impatient, he hisses furiously and finally gives a warning shriek. Then off he goes, and we take a last look at the kneeling camels munching away as unconcerned as if their destroyer had never invaded their peaceful country.

Mekidje is practically at sea-level; Eskishehr is a tableland two thousand feet high. We had therefore a steady rise on the whole journey up the valley formed by the Kara Su, a river which has its source in the neighbourhood of Eskishehr. On each side rounded hills shut out the horizon, save where, here and there, a tributary valley would reveal, through steep-sided gorges, a distant view of purple ridges with snow-clad tops.

It was night when we arrived at Eskishehr, and we groped our way to the Grand Hôtel d'Anatolie, kept by Greeks. It was at this hotel that we first met Hassan, who was destined to play such a large part in our future travels. He was an Albanian Turk, and had been introduced to us by our friends in Constantinople, whom he accompanied on their shooting expeditions in this district. They had written to ask him to look after us during our brief stay at Eskishehr.

Ibrahim brought him into our room, and there he stood silently, after salaaming us in the usual way.

Ibrahim was a tall man, but Hassan towered above him. He wore a huge sheepskin coat, which added to his massive, impressive look.

X looked up words in her Turkish book.

"They told us you would look after us here?" she said.

As my eyes,' he answered, very quietly and simply And thus began one of those friendships on which neither time nor distance can leave its mark.

Two days later X asked him whether he would accompany us on the next stage of our journey.

Will you come with us and guard us well?' she said He dropped on one knee and kissed her hand.

On my head be it,' he said.

Eskishehr, before the days of the railway, was a purely Turkish town. It displayed the usual chaos of mud brick and wooden houses, with their lower windows carefully latticed over for the concealment of the women, of narrow, winding bazaars—here a display of brightly coloured clothes and rugs, there a noisy street of smithies and carpenters' shops, and rising above it all the minarets of half a dozen mosques.

But the railway's mark is on it to day. The population has been increased by some five thousand Tartars and Armenians, whose houses, planted together near the line, have a neat, modern, shoddy look, contrasting with the picturesque squalor of the ancient Turkish town.

At Eskishehr a Greek lady took us to see a Turkish wedding and we were ushered into the house of the bridegroom. The preliminary cere-

monies had already begun; in fact they had been going on all day. The bride sat at the end of a room which had been cleared of everything except the low stool which she occupied. She was a lumpy-looking girl of seventeen or so, and sat there motionless with downcast eyes. On the floor sat dozens of women, packed as tight as the room could hold. The bride might neither look up nor speak, which seemed hard, for every woman in the room was both looking at her and speaking about her; the hubbub was terrible.

She rose as we entered, and kissed our hands; this much is apparently allowed on the arrival of strangers. The Greek lady explained that she was obliged to stand until we asked her to sit down again, and that she might not look at us. This was a good deal to ask on such an occasion; European ladies are not, as a rule, guests at the wedding of the Turkish poor, and we caught one or two sly peeps from under her long eyelashes. We joined the throng on the floor and continued to gaze at her as every one else did. Marriage customs in general, and her own affairs in particular, were discussed for our benefit, the Greek lady interpreting in torrents of voluble French.

"She may not speak to her husband for forty-eight hours. When he comes in he will lift the

veil and see his bride for the first time. Then he puts a girdle round her waist and it is finished. His mother chose her for him."

By and by a large tray was brought in, piled up with rounds of native bread and plates of chicken. It was placed on a low stool in the centre of us all, and, following everybody's example, we grabbed alternate bits of chicken and bread. Then followed hunches of cake made of nuts and honey.

We were still eating when we heard a noise of singing and musical instruments outside; it became louder and louder, and finally stopped by the house.

"They are singing 'Behold the bridegroom cometh,'" said the Greek lady, "the man is being brought in a procession of all his friends."

The food was hastily removed, and all the guests were marshalled into an adjoining room, which already seemed as full as it could hold of babies and children, and of old bags who presumably had been left to look after the younger ones. We were allowed to remain while the finishing touches were put on the bride. Her face was first plastered all over with little ornaments cut out of silver paper and stuck on with white of egg, then she was covered over entirely with a large violet veil. And so we left her

sitting there, sheepish and placid in the extreme, in strange contrast to the voluble Greek lady and the excited friends. We met the bridegroom in the passage. He kissed his father, and stood first on one foot and then on the other. His mother took him by the shoulders, opened the door of the room we had just left, and pushed him in. Let us hope that the silver ornaments did their work and made his bride pleasing in his sight when he lifted the violet veil. What she thought of him did not concern us any more than it did her or her friends, for such thoughts may not enter the minds of Turkish brides.

It is 267 miles or thereabouts from Eskişehir to Konia. It took us fifteen hours by rail. We were now on the summit of the tableland; the river valley gradually gave way to long stretches where signs of cultivation were more apparent. We were getting into the great wheat-growing district, which the railway is causing to extend year by year. At Karahissar a gigantic rock with straight sides and castellated top rises abruptly out of the plain, and here another corn-growing valley merges into the great plain stretching away to the north.

Then darkness set in, and the Monster ran steadily on with us into the unknown. Towards



A WELL IN THE KONIA PLAINS.

eight o'clock there was a sudden stop: it had come to the end of its tether.

We had left Calphopolos and Ibrahim at Eskishehr, and now only Constantin remained as a link with civilisation. Hassan had appeared at the station at Eskishehr, prepared to accompany us round the world if need be. He wore a brown suit of Turkish trousers, and a zouave coat under his sheepskin cloak. His pockets bulged rather, so did the wide leather belt which he used as a pocket; otherwise his worldly goods were tied up in a white pocket-handkerchief.

And so we arrived at Konia. Behind us was the railway, leading back to the things we knew, to the things we should hope to see again; before us was the plain, leading us to strange new things, things we should, perhaps, just see once and leave behind for ever. The iron Monster had dumped us down, and was no further concerned with us; if we would go farther, it must be by taking thought for ourselves.

There were horses and carts to hire; there were provisions to lay in; there was the escort of Zaptiehs to be procured and the good will of the authorities to be obtained. We had letters of introduction to Ferid Pasba, then Governor of the Konia vilayet and since Grand Vizier of Constantinople. He was not as other governors;

he was called the great and the good, and had established law and order in his province. There need be no fear of brigandage while we were within the boundaries of his jurisdiction.

The Government building occupied one side of the square in which stood our hotel, and we sent Hassan across to pay our respects. But Feid Pasha was away, which caused us great disappointment; we could only see the acting Governor.

Taking Hassan and Constantin with us, we went up the long flight of steps and down a corridor leading to the Governor's room. Peasants and ragged soldiers hung about the passage, and black-coated Jewish-looking men hurried in and out. A soldier showed us the way, holding back the curtains which concealed the entrance to various rooms, and from behind which the mysterious-looking Jews were continually creeping.

The acting Governor sat at a table covered with official documents; a divan, harder than those we had seen in the houses, ran along two walls, on which several secretaries, holding the paper on which they wrote on the palms of their left hands,

X was getting fluent in Turkish, she now reeled off a few phrases. Hassan stood beside

fied, and we noticed that all the men greeted him very courteously. X then endeavoured to explain our desire to travel to Mersina, and requested the services of a suitable escort. Owing to limitations in her knowledge of the Turkish vocabulary, the nearest she could get to it was that the British Consul at Mersina loved us dearly and wished us to come to him. Matters were getting to a deadlock; the officials appeared to be asking us what was the object of our journey, and we could only insist on the intense love of our British Consul.

Suddenly another visitor was ushered in, and for the first time since leaving Nicæa the strange sound of the English tongue fell upon our ears. The newcomer was Dr. Nakashian, an Armenian doctor living in Konia.

He at once acted as interpreter. Officialdom for once put no obstacles in the way, and an escort was promised us for the journey. The acting Governor inquired whether we should like to see the sights of Konia; and on our replying in the affirmative, he arranged that we should be taken round that afternoon. Dr. Nakashian promised to accompany us.

Accordingly we sallied out later on horseback with Hassan. Dr. Nakashian was mounted on a splendid Arah mare. The Government Protec-

tion, in the shape of two Zaptiehs and a captain, followed in a close carriage. We started off very decorously, but the Arab mare became excited, and plunged and galloped down the street; our horses caught the infection, and we followed hard, the Government Protection put its head out of each window and shouted; the driver lashed his jaded horse, and the rickety carriage lurched after us in a cloud of dust. The natives lining the streets shouted encouragingly; finally we landed at the Dervish mosque. Dervishes are strong in Konia. Their founder is buried here, and his tomb is an object of pilgrimage. The chief feature of the mosque is its wonderful polished floor, where the dancing ceremonies take place.

At Konia one is struck with the railway's influence. There are many fine buildings in the last stages of decay in this ancient city—the palace, with its one remaining tower, the fragments of the old walls found here and there in the middle of the modern town; the mosques lined with faience, beautiful even in its fragments. Contrast with this the squalor and the dirt of the present Turkish streets, the earth and wood houses, enclosed in walls of earth, the apathetic natives, and the general feeling of stagnation and decay.

Then, outside the town, the railway appears ; modern European houses spring up round it ; offices for the Company, and an hotel. A whiff of stir and bustle brought in along with the iron fangs of the Monster brings a sense of fresh life to these people, whose existence seemed one long decay of better things, like that of the ruins amongst which they spend their days.

CHAPTER V.

ACROSS THE PLAIN

[T was on the morning of the third day after our arrival at Honia that we made the plunge into the great plain from the spot where the Monster had left us. We collected in the square in front of the Government building. There were two covered carts to convey the baggage, and in one of these Constantin and Hassan also rode, A and I rode horses, and had saddle-bags slung under our saddles. Our escort consisted of three Zaptiehs, a lieutenant, Rejeb and an ancient sergeant, Mustapha. The head of the police accompanied us a few miles out of the town.

Slowly, riding at a loo's pace, we left it all behind—the squalid streets, the modern houses, the scraggy little trees, the lumpy road became a deeply rutted track bordering stubble fields, lumbering carts passed us, squeaking terribly as the wheels lurched out of the ruts to make way for us. The track became an ill defined path,

along which heavily laden pack animals slowly toiled, raising clouds of dust. Turning in our saddles, all we could see of Konia was the minarets of its mosques standing above a confused blur on the horizon line.

We had now got beyond the point where one met others on the road ; we had become our own world, travelling with the sun through space. When he disappeared below the horizon we pitched our camp and waited for his reappearance on the opposite side. At the first glimmer announcing his arrival the tents were struck, the carts loaded up, and by the time his face peeped over the line we were in our saddles, ready once more to follow him to his journey's end.

It is a great half-desert plain, this part of Anatolia ; desert only where it is waterless, and very fertile where irrigation is possible. In places it seemed to form one huge grazing ground ; herds of black cattle munching its coarse, dried-up herbage ; flocks of mohair goats and sheep were herded by boys in white sheep-skin coats, tended by yellow dogs. Then we knew that a village would be somewhere about, although we did not always see it ; for here too the villages are the colour of the surrounding country, and are only visible in very clear sunlight.

monotonous days of the shepherd boys, marked only by the gathering in of their flocks at night

How will it be when the Monster comes, roaring and snorting through these silent plains, polluting this clear air with his dust and smoke? At first these haughty, resentful shepherds will stand aloof from the invasion, the yellow dogs will bark in vain at the intrusion. Then slowly its daily appearance will come to them as the sun comes in the morning and the stars at night. Unconsciously it also will become a part of the routine of their lives. They will accept it, as they accept everything else. But use it? That is a different tale. It will be a long fight, but the Monster has always conquered in the end.

On the third day we rode into Karaman. A mediæval castle crowns the town, and is visible at some little distance across the plain. The old sergeant, Mustapha, startled us by suddenly greeting it from afar —

“Ah, Karaman, you beautiful Karaman, city of peace and plenty! Ah, Karaman, beloved Karaman!”

And the Zaptichs, taking up the refrain, made the silent plains ring with “Karaman! beautiful Karaman!”

We pitched our tents on a grass plot in the

centre of the town. Constantin began preparing the evening meal, and the natives hung round in groups staring at us, or brought in supplies of fuel and milk and eggs. A seedy-looking European pushed his way up to our tent and began storming at us in French.

But it is impossible for you to camp here; it is not allowable, you must come at once to my house. There is nothing to say."

X and I tried to rouse our bewildered minds out of the Eastern sense of repose into which they had sunk through all these days. We concluded that Karaman must possess an urban district council, and that we were breaking some by-law of the town. We pressed for further enlightenment.

"But do you not see all these people looking at you? It is not for you to camp here. My house is ready for you. There are good beds, and it is dry; but this . . ." and he waved his hand at our preparations. "It is not possible; there is nothing to say."

By this time Hassan and Rejeb, into whose hands we had been entrusted for protection, came up and stood over us, looking threateningly at our gesticulating, excited friend.

"I do not understand," I said. "Who says that we may not camp here?"

"But it is I that say it; it is not possible. My house is ready; there is nothing to say."

"Who are you?" I said.

"I am an Austrian," he answered. Then he lowered his voice. "I am here," he said, "as commercial agent of the Ottoman Railway."

"Very good," I answered; "and now tell us why we cannot camp here."

"But it is damp," he said; "look at the mud."

"Oh, is that all?" I said. "We are much obliged to you for the offer of your house, but we always sleep out."

"But I have good beds," he said, "and a dry room at your service. There is nothing to say."

At this point Rejeb could contain himself no longer. He spoke sternly to the Austrian in Turkish.

"What do you want?" he said. "These ladies are under my protection. What are you saying to them?"

The man poured out volumes of Turkish; Rejeb and he had a violent altercation, which seemed likely to end in blows.

"Come, come," I said to the man, "enough of this. We are much obliged to you for your offer of hospitality, but we prefer to remain outside."

He seemed totally unable to understand that this could be the case. "If it is myself you do not care about," he said in a crestfallen manner,

"I can easily move from the house. The beds are clean and they are dry."

We finally consented to spend the evening at his house, and accompanied him through the streets, Rejeb and Hassan following closely on our heels. He showed us into a stuffy little sitting room. Every corner was crammed with gimcracks, the whole place reeked of musty wool chair backs.

Then we followed him upstairs, we must, at any rate, "look at the beds"—he evidently thought the sight of them would prove irresistible.

The beds were, doubtless, no worse than the ordinary type to be found in country inns; but to us, coming out of the sweet and wholesome air of the untainted plain, they seemed to be the very embodiment of stuffiness and discomfort. The windows, which had evidently not been opened for some time, were heavily draped, so as effectually to exclude all light and air even when open.

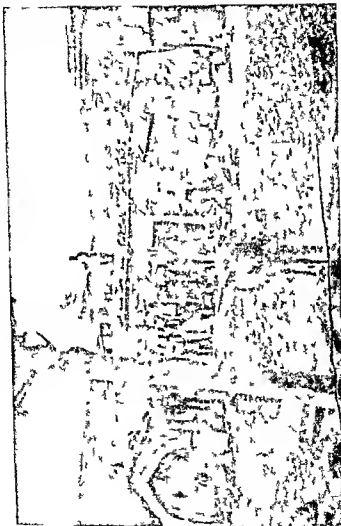
"There, now do you see? It is clean, it is dry. There is nothing humid here, but out there it is exposed, it is damp—it is not allowable."

We waived the question for the moment, reserving our forces for a later attack, and returned to the sitting-room, where a native woman was preparing the evening meal.

A serving-woman appeared and said that our men wished to see us; they had been sitting on the doorstep ever since we entered the house, and refused to go away. The Austrian went out to them; high words ensued, and we looked through the door. The Austrian, crimson with rage, was gesticulating violently and pouring out torrents of Turkish. Rejeb stood in front of him, hitting his long riding-boot with his whip and answering with some heat. Above him towered Hassan, very calm and very quiet, slowly rolling up a cigarette and now and then putting in a single word in support of Rejeb.

The Austrian turned to us. "Can you not send these men away, ladies? It is an impertinence. They refuse to leave you here unless they themselves sleep in the house. They say they have orders never to leave you, but surely they can see what I am!"

We calmed him down as best we could, and insisted on our intention of returning to our tents. He could not understand it, and, I should think, never will. But we got away, Rejeb and Hassan one on each side of us. When we were



out on the road in cover of darkness both men burst into loud roars of laughter.

"Have we not done well, Effendi?" they said. "We have rescued you from the mad little man. The great doctor in London, has he not said, 'You shall sleep in the tent every night'?"

And gathering round our camp fire in the damp and the mud, we rejoiced with Hassan and Rejeb over their gallant assault and our fortunate escape.

Two days' further ride brought us to Eregli. We approached it in the dusk, riding during the last hour through what appeared to be low copse wood. The place seemed low and damp. We rode past the door of the khan, and the men besought us to go there instead of camping outside. Constantin said he was ill; the drivers said their horses would be ill. But Rejeb and Hassan took our side, and we had the tents pitched on a spot which seemed dry in the darkness. Next morning we awoke to find that we were encircled by a loop of the river, and in a dense white mist. It was so cold that the milk froze as we poured it into the tea. We ate our breakfast with our gloves on, walking up and down to keep warm.

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decided, however, to give them a day's respite and ride out ourselves to Iyritz in search of the Hittite inscription at that place

An hour's ride took us clear of the mists, and the sun came out hot and strong. Our road lay up a gorgeous richly wooded river valley. For the first time on our journey we realized what the absence of water and trees had meant. Our horses' feet crackled over brown and red autumn leaves, autumn smells, crisp and fresh, filled the air, brown trout darted from under dark rocks in the stream. Away through gaps in the low encircling hills we got sudden visions of two gigantic white topped mountain peaks—the first suggestion of our approach to the Taurus barrier.

Iyritz is a good three hours' ride from Eregli, and lies high on one of the lower hills. We left our horses in the village and climbed on foot to the spot where the river, rushing suddenly out of the bowels of the earth, has formed a cave in the limestone cliff. Below this the stream had cut its way through the rock, leaving steep sides of bare stone. At one point the ground shelved out on a level with the bed of the stream, and the waters swept round a corner, so that the face of the rock overlooking them was almost hidden from any one on the same shore.

It is on this face that the Hittite inscription is carved. A god, with a stalk of corn and a bunch of grapes in his hands, stands over a man who is in an attitude of adoration before him.

There it stands, hidden from the casual observer, visited by no one but the native who comes to cure his sickness in the sacred waters of the cave above.

Away in the desolate hills, off the track of man, the god has looked down on the waters of the river through all those ages since the days of the Hittites, which count as nothing in the time which it took this same river to carve its bed out of the eternal hills. How much longer will its solitude be left unviolated? When the iron Monster comes bellowing into Eregh his shriek will be heard among these silent hills, and following in his footsteps countless hordes of tourists will invade this sacred spot.

* * * * *

It was the sixth day after leaving Konia and we were in full view of the Taurus mountains. We were crossing the same stretch of barren plain, with its occasional patches of cultivation, its hidden villages with the flocks and herds trooping in at sundown. But the bounded horizon changed our conception of it—it was no longer a limitless plain. The nearer ranges stood

out in dark purples and blues, behind and above towered the snow clad heights which, looking down on to the Mediterranean shores, knew of the life and bustle of its sea girt towns

We had come out on the other side of the unknown plain and the aspect of things was changed. What drew us on now was not the mystery of unexplored space, but the feeling that here was a great barrier to cross. We were about to share with these heights the knowledge of what lay on the other side. But there was more than this. we were about to do what the Monster might possibly fail to do. As we drew near the barrier the mysterious allusions to his approach all took the form of pointing at this barrier. "So far and no farther he may come," they seemed to say.

As I rode with Mustapha up a long, winding pass on the outskirts of the range he pointed at the valley below us. "The Turkish Railway," he said solemnly.

A long line of laden camels wound slowly up the opposite side. for a full quarter of a mile they covered in single file the road winding up out of the valley. I pulled my horse up and Mustapha stopped his alongside of mine. We both bent our heads forward and listened. The sound of their tinkling bells came faintly across

the valley to us ; the low, musical tones, the quiet, measured movement, all was in keeping with the towering mountains and the still, clear air. Hassan rode up with the other men and joined us. He put his hands up to his mouth and gave a shrill, prolonged whistle in exact imitation of the engine we had left at Konia. The men looked at one another and laughed. Then they shrugged their shoulders and pushed on up the path.

Our spirits sank when we got near enough to distinguish European clothes on the leader of the party, we had been feeling ourselves tolerably safe from "Europeans" at this altitude. Already from afar we were greeted in voluble French, which heightened our fears. The man was accompanied by a Turkish official and two Zaptiehs. The road was so steep that they dismounted and led their horses, both men and animals panting furiously. Our horses slid down the rough track, scattering the loose stones before them in all directions, and we joined the party below.

"Salutations from the Governor, and he bids you welcome to Boulghar Maden." The man took off his fez and bowed. We saw that he was a cut above the enemy we had been fearing, and we felt happier. He then explained that the Governor was most perturbed lest we should not be received in proper manner, and had commissioned him, Onik, to make all arrangements for our comfort. We were to be the guests of his friends, and he had caused rooms to be got in the house of a Greek family, where we had passed down the feast he was preparing. He then sent the cars expecting us at the Government station at the next day. Hassan and Rejalel down the hill together and

rode through the village to the Government buildings. A line of Zaptiehs was drawn up at the entrance, and fired a salute as we passed. Then we dismounted, and were led through the usual curtain-hung doors into the Governor's presence.

With our guide as interpreter, we felt sure that the correct salutations would be delivered on our behalf. The health of the King of England, and of our fathers the great Pashas, was duly inquired after. Onik then hustled us away to the Greek house. Here we found the women in a state of great excitement. Onik had sent down sheets for our beds, which were being made up on the divans. He threw off his coat and set to work on the beds, helping the fat Greek mother, who argued volubly with him the whole time, to smooth out the sheets. The two daughters of the house looked on and laughed; the little fat boy put his finger in his mouth and roared with laughter. Hassan stood in the doorway beaming with satisfaction. We were to sleep indoors; but was it not with Government sanction and under Government auspices? This was quite a different matter from the Karaman experience.

Rejeb was having a good time recounting our adventures to his brother officers at the Govern-

CHAPTER VI

IN THE TAURUS

THE Taurus range bounds in a semicircle the base of the plateau we had crossed. We had always been over three thousand feet above sea level and now the Taurus mountains rose high above us. The pass we were making for is nearly six thousand feet above sea level, and it looked low in comparison with the range. After leaving Eregli we had made a short day to Tchaym, some four hours' ride across a very barren stretch of country, with the snow mountains always in front of us. The next day was to be our last on the plains, for our destination was Ulu Kishla, well up on the hills.

At Ulu Kishla we lunched in a huge khan, half in ruins, the size of which suggested the almost inconceivable size of the caravans which must have passed in better days. Here we decided to send the carts on with half the escort, to await us at the next stage on the main road. Taking Hassan and Rejab and one of the Zaptiehs with

us, we branched off to visit Boulghar Maden, the highest village of the Taurus, noted for its silver mines. It was a rough ride up; now over chunks of rock, now along slippery grass slopes, then rock again and sliding hits of stone.

The hills shut us in all round until we neared the summit of the pass; here we reached a level above that of the heights we had skirted on the previous day, and we could see the whole long line of peaks ranging westward to the sea. In front of us the chain of mountains on the opposite side of the valley obscured the view. We rode towards them and began the descent into the valley below. Boulghar Maden lies perched on the hillside, and stretches into the valley, so that standing outside the higher houses you looked down on a sea of flat roofs below you. Tall, thin poplar trees, rising above the houses in rows, mark it out like a chessboard. The great hillside which backs it to the south and keeps off the sun till midday is scarred and marked with the entrances to the mines.

A small party of horsemen rode out from the town and came clampering up the hills to meet us. Rejeh confessed to having sent the Karaman from Ulu Kishla announcing our Governor, and suggested that this recounting our mission sent out by him to receive us at the Govern-

ment House whither he had hastened back after seeing us safely bestowed

A messenger arrived from the Governor—were the ladies ready for the feast? The dishes had been prepared and the servants were awaiting commands. We invited Onik to stay and help us through, for this was not the first time we had experienced Turkish hospitality and suspected that our powers would be taxed to the full

The little low table was brought in, and Onik showed the Greek mother how to lay it in the European fashion. The dishes began to arrive—curries and pilafs and roasted kid, dolmas and chickens and kebabs, and then the nameless sweet dishes which Turkish cooks only know how to prepare. At the fourth course I made an attempt to strike, but Onik was shocked

‘Ah, mademoiselle, just to please the Governor!’ and he piled up my plate

At the fifth course he anticipated me

Now, mademoiselle, to please the Governor”

At the sixth “Now, mademoiselle——”

No,” I said, “Governor or no Governor, I can’t”

His face was a study

But, mademoiselle, only to please the Governor!” he insisted

"You will have to do it all yourself, then," I said; "he won't know which of us has eaten it."

He rose manfully to the occasion and did his best. Only at the last dish did he lean back and, rubbing himself gently, murmur:—

"Ah me! and all that merely to please the Governor!"

We left Boulghar Maden the next morning. The Governor insisted that we should drive in his carriage down to Chifte Khan, the point on the main route where we were to meet our carts. The road had only been made a few years, and they were very proud of it; it was an exquisite road, we were told. The Governor, we were also told, was very proud of his carriage. When he went to visit the mines he had it out; but his horse was led behind, for apparently his pride in it was not so great as was his regard for his own comfort, not to say safety. But here was an occasion for him to vaunt his pride with none of the accompanying discomforts.

It arrived—a springless box on wheels, a hard and narrow seat on each side, the top encased in a heavy roof, with rattling glass windows. The whole was painted a bright primrose yellow, and was drawn by two small Turkish horses. X and I got in somewhat ruefully. It was a glorious, fresh, sunny day, and we were about

to pass through some of the finest scenery of the Taurus district.

Onik, who came to start us on the way, and Hassan, sat inside with us. The Governor had sent his servants to ride our horses; they and the Zaptiehs followed in a long string behind. For the first mile or two the road was fairly smooth; the vehicle lumbered heavily along; when it struck a loose stone the glass rattled furiously. We peered longingly through the panes, trying to catch glimpses of our surroundings. Pine woods nodded in the light breeze, but the noise drowned their whispers. Valley and hills streaked with laughing shadows beckoned to us to come out and look at them. Every turn in the road displayed new vistas of pine-clad slopes, shooting long tongues of green into the brown-red rocks.

As time went on the road became very rough; great masses of solid rock lay across it, and the carriage, lurching up over them, jumped us about on the hard seats and knocked us up against one another. Hassan took it calmly; he merely ejaculated "Aman" when an extra lurch sent him flying off the seat.

Onik, however, was sorely troubled.

"Ah me!" he cried out at intervals, "and all this just to please the Governor!"

At times it was not only painful but positively dangerous. The side of the hill would rise up in perpendicular walls of rock, and a narrow ledge of road, cut at right angles to it, barely gave width enough for the wheels to pass; a jerk in the wrong direction would have precipitated us into the valley beneath.

At such moments Onik, pink with terror and excitement, opening with difficulty the door at the back, would scramble out and follow on foot. The crisis over, his sense of humour would return and he would take his seat again, throw up his hands and murmur, "And all this to please the Governor!"

Then the carriage came to a dead stop. In front of us the ledge of rock had broken away, and two great boulders, fallen from above, blocked the narrow road.

X pointed down the steep precipice.

"Look, Hassan, look," she said, pretending to shudder.

Hassan looked.

"You go over, I go too," was his reply.

The driver got down and examined the obstruction. We all got out and examined it. The servants leading our horses behind dismounted and examined it. The horses stood with their noses on it and stared stupidly. Then

everybody took hold of the wheels and lifted the carriage bodily over.

Bruised and exhausted, shaken in body and nerves, we were finally safely landed at Chifte Khan, where we found our men and carts awaiting us. We flung ourselves down on the grass of a little orchard and thanked Heaven for our deliverance from the task of pleasing Governors. Hassan stood over us and gazed thoughtfully at the yellow carriage standing by the roadside, while the driver devoured pilaf at the door of the khan.

"It is well now," he said; "we have pleased the Governor."

The driver clambered up on the seat again, and turned his horses' heads up the road we had left.

"Thank Heaven," said our guide, "that we are still alive to see it depart!"

CHAPTER VII.

A STORM IN THE MOUNTAINS.

FROM Chifte Khan we followed a good road, through the gorgeous vale of Bozanti, to Ak Kupru, where we pitched our camp for the night by the side of the river Chakut.

The weather broke suddenly, and we reached the place in torrents of rain.

The wind, tearing in gusts up the valley, shook the walls of the tent, and the ropes strained at the pegs. It drove the rain so hard against the white canvas that it forced the drops through almost against their will. It would have been so much easier for them just to run down the outside slope.

I moved my bed a little in order to get a dry place between two sets of drips. X surveyed my endeavours from where she sat, mechanically tilting a pool off her mackintosh rug when the accumulated drops showed signs of flowing in disastrous directions.

“It’s no use trying not to be wet,” she said, “when there is no way of keeping dry.”

A new drip in the centre of the two original ones forced me to accept her view, and we sat silently watching the scene outside. In front of us a bridge crossed the river, and from it wound the road we should follow, zigzagging up until it disappeared round a corner. The Taurus mountains rose like a black barrier in front of us, towering aloft in gigantic walls of rock; then layers of black forest and grassy slopes, then misty tops showing white snow where the clouds parted. At their feet on the other side lay the great Cilician plain, covered with yellow crops and brown earth and clothed with mud-coloured villages. On the other side also was the Mediterranean, blue and calm; there were sun and warmth and quiet, and people quietly basking in the heat. But on this side there were turmoil and cold and wet; the earth’s face was hard and bare, and over it angry waters dashed in heedless, headlong fury; angry clouds overhead vied with them, shooting down relentless torrents of rain.

We sought refuge in the khan for the evening meal, sharing the fire with our own men and the Zaptiehs. Onik, always merry and full of resource even on such an evening, made the men sit round so as to leave an empty space

in the centre of the room. Then he produced a walking-stick and laid it flat on the ground.

"Stand up, O stick!" he said, waving his hand and addressing it in Turkish.

Not a sound could he heard in the room; all eyes were fixed on the stick, which slowly rose and stood up apparently of itself.

"Ha! ha!" went round the room in deep murmurs.

"Lie down, O stick!" said Onik.

And the stick, after giving a hop or two, went slowly down on the floor again.

For full half an hour did this man, by means of a fine thread, invisible in the dim firelight, go through a series of tricks with the walking-stick. The men never moved or took their eyes off it for a moment, but showed no curiosity about it. They took it, like everything else, as a matter of course.

Hassan and Rejeh, two silent men, talked together the whole night long just outside our tent. What with this and the wind and the rain, and the flapping of the tent and the drips, which coursing down the canvas found new points of entry at every moment, we got but little rest.

Hassan greeted us with an anxious look next morning.

Omik announced his intention of returning, he could reach Boulghar Maden that evening if he went no farther, and he did not relish the idea of another night such as the one he had just spent.

At midday we arrived at Gulek Boghaz, where we found a new detachment of Zaptiehs awaiting us. The men took our horses and led them into the stable. Streams of water ran off horses and men alike and collected in pools about the uneven floor. We hushed past the horses' heels and went on into the living room leading out of the stable, where a roaring wood fire blazed at the far end. We lay on the rough divan in the corner and thawed and dried. The men came in from seeing to their horses, and the fire drew clouds of thick steam out of their soaking clothes.

Rejeb sent out a Zaptieh to see if there was any sign of the carts, but he returned with no news save that of increasing rain. We dozed round the hot fire, the Zaptiehs sat at the far end of the room and smoked, there was no sound but the heating of the rain outside and of the horses munching and stamping in the adjoining room.

More than an hour passed, and still no sign of the carts. We roused ourselves and conjectured all the possibilities of mishap: a wheel had come off, they had stuck in the mud, they

had lost their way; the roads were too heavy for the horses after the rain; they had been attacked by brigands.

X, however, had her own suspicions. The drivers had been very loth to leave Ak Kupru, and they knew of our intention of pushing on after the midday rest. They were dawdling on the road or sheltering somewhere out of the rain, so to ensure arriving too late for us to get on to the next stage.

She cast round for a method of outwitting them, and at last hit on one.

"You take two of the new Zaptiehs," she said, "and ride on with them to the next khan; I will wait here until the carts turn up. We cannot leave you alone, and that will be an excuse to make the men come on."

I always did as X told me, and rose obediently from the warm corner. As I drew on my dry overcoat, hot from the fire, and looked out at the drenching rain, I felt strongly drawn in sympathy towards the drivers. My horse was saddled and dragged outside, as loth to leave its companions as I was. I mounted, and bid farewell to Rejeh and Mustapha, who were returning to Konia. It was a tearful parting, for they had been with us now for eleven days, and we were fast friends. X stood in the doorway of the stable.

"When you get to the khan," she called out after me, 'say Atesh getir.'"

All right," I said obediently. What "atesh getir" meant I did not know; but X said I was to say it and that was enough. I was awfully afraid of forgetting it, and it was too wet to make a note, so I kept on repeating it at intervals. The Zaptiehs rode one behind and one before me, for the road was narrow. By-and-by we entered a defile not more than three or four yards across, where the rocks towered above us quite perpendicularly on one side and overhung us on the other; the road merged in the bed of the stream, and a large piece of fallen rock nearly blocked the way. We were passing through the famous Cilician Gates.

I repeated "Atesh getir" devoutly, and we hurried on. A two hours' ride brought us to a khan on the side of the road. One of the Zaptiehs galloped ahead to announce our arrival. The ground was so deep in mud, was full of dripping

The innkeeper helped me to "Atesh getir." He nodded as he led me into a vast room without even the usual wood fire burning up a chimney in the middle, and they gave me a three-legged stool to sit on.

I thanked them and said "Atesh getir" once more. The Zaptiehs came ond turned my hat and coat round and round in front of the fire to dry, os an excuse to dry their own. A boy appeared with more logs of wood, which he threw on the fire. Every now ond then the innkeeper would come and jabber ot me, and I smiled and nodded and said "Atesh getir." It seemed now to have become o sort of joke, for every time I said it the Zaptiehs and the other men laughed, and I cought the words repeatedly in their conversation omongst themselves. Every few minutes the boy came and threw more wood on the fire; then he would turn and ask me a question. I hod nothing but "Atesh getir" to say. But I felt o little nervous about the size of the fire. It was exceeding the bounds of the heartb, and I was afroid would sooa burn down the rotten old place, for the heat was terrific. So I would point at the fire and shake my head when he threw on the logs; hut he only grinned and went off to return with some more.

As I sat there waiting for X, I kaew that I should always remember that warmth is the one thing in the world which really matters. I was hungry, for we had not tasted much food that day. There was not much to sit upoa—the stool had got very hard; the room was dirty and

We were awakened early by the departure, before sunrise, of the men and animals who, quartered in the yard of which our shed formed part, had not given us much peace during the night. We were not loth, on our part, to leave the tent, which had caught and retained the smell rising up from the sodden earth floor, until we were nearly choked with the fumes. It was still raining, and the peaks we had ridden under the day before were shrouded in mist. We kept on descending slowly, and by-and-by we came out on a piece of open moorland. The sun began to appear again now. We were leaving it all behind—the cold and the wet and the storms of the hills. We were getting into the stillness of the plains again. The men took off their overcoats and rolled them up on their saddles behind. One by one we shed the wraps which had seemed so thin and inefficient under the snowy heights; they were getting unbearable here.

We expected at every turn to get a view of the sea. In spite of this, its first appearance was so sudden as to come as a *surprise*. We rounded a corner, and there it lay, as we had pictured it on the other side, still and bright, with no suggestion of storm and turmoil. It was not till that moment that we had the distinct feeling of having crossed the barrier. Each step forward now

CHAPTER VIII.

A ROYAL PROGRESS.

IN the line of country stretching from Tarsus eastward to Urfa there is a series of stations of the American Mission Board. Travelling, as we did, in the direction of this line, we made these stations our stages, and hired horses and men afresh at each place.

At Tarsus we camped in the playground of the mission school. On the evening of our arrival out of the Taurus mountains we were eating off spotless cloths with knives and forks, and were singing "Onward, Christian soldiers" with a hundred Armenian and Greek students.

The missionaries were the embodiment of hospitality. They knew what the discomforts of our journey had been, for they have gone through much the same experience themselves in order to arrive at their present homes; and so we found hot baths awaiting us and fresh supplies of hairpins; buttons were sewn on, and clothes were sent to the wash. We started off

on the road again clean and tidy, with a linen bag full of home-made white bread, which would see us through many days. We also carried with us thoughts of the splendid work which is being done by them and of the hardship and danger many of them have gone through in carrying out this work of education among these Eastern Christians.

But when we were on the road again we were glad to be there—glad to hear only the sound of the Turkish tongue, glad to lie out once more under the stars and eat our meal round the camp fire at night.

Occasionally, too, we would get sudden reminders of the institutions we had left. A stray Armenian would accost us on the road with

"Who are you? Where are you going? What is your name?" in the English tongue, with a perceptible nasal twang. We would have a momentary unpleasant sense of unpertinent familiarity. Then we pulled ourselves together and remembered the doctrine of universal brotherly love which was being instilled into the minds of mission students, and we tried hard not to mind when the individual proceeded to tell us that we were his sisters, that he loved us very much, and would we give him a subscription towards a harmonium for his church.

It was during this stage of our journey, also, that we were taken to be royalties and received at the larger towns with military honours. The idea seems to have emanated from Konia after our departure. We had left cards on the officials at the Government House. X's Christian name was Victoria, and her address printed on the card was Prince's Gate. To the Turkish mind this was conclusive evidence that she was a relation of the great queen, and instructions for our suitable reception were accordingly telegraphed on. At Adana we found ourselves indisputably "daughters of the King of Switzerland." It was of no use denying it.

From Adana our next stage was to Aintab. Our luggage had now all to be conveyed on pack mules, for we were going over tracks where wheels could not pass. This made our party larger, for we needed three mules for the baggage, and they were accompanied by three muleteers, who also looked after our horses and the mules ridden by our men. Our escort consisted of four Zaptiehs and a captain. Nominally, they received no pay from us, but the "backsheesh" which we were expected to give them no doubt compensated for the arrears of pay from which the Turkish soldier invariably suffers.

We had parted with Constantin at Adana.

He was not very suitable for really rough camping work and we had asked the missionaries at Adana to recommend us a less civilized person, who would be more competent in tight places. Through them we engaged an Armenian, Arten by name. He could only speak Turkish, so we were now entirely thrown on our own resources as to Turkish conversation. X, however, had acquired quite enough of the language to be intelligible to Hasan who interpreted our wants to the others.

We had hardly left Adana before incessant heavy rains came on, which turned the tracks into impassable mud swamps. We struggled on as far as Hamudieh, where we sought refuge in the house of an Austrian widow who ran a large cotton mill in the place. For three days the rain came down in torrents. I went to bed indoors with fever, X, however, still preferred to sleep out in the tent in pools of water, which the men vainly endeavoured to keep out by digging trenches all round it. On the third day we sallied out again and pitched our camp in the middle of little green pasture fields in a lovely valley. Real milking cows strayed about in the little fields, and cocks and hens crowed and cackled familiarly close to us. This was a very different country from the one we had left.

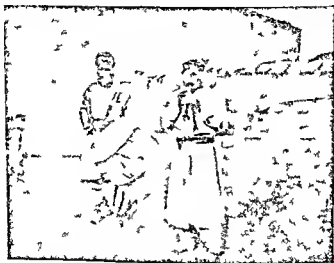
In spite of the fact that we had had to exchange wheels for pack mules, it seemed far more civilized and cultivated. Trees and water everywhere gave one a feeling of life and growing things, unlike the stagnation of the waterless parts.

The Zaptiehs here, when greeting the town or village we were approaching, would always include in their praises its power of providing milk and eggs. Our former Zaptiehs had told them that we had an insatiable desire for these luxuries, and they would use this as an inducement for us to come on to any place where they particularly desired to camp—a desire which generally arose from the existence of some large khan where they could spend a sociable evening. And so the greeting took the form of:—

“Oh, it is a lovely village; there are many eggs, there is much milk. The cows are never dry, and the hens never cease to lay. The chickens, too, are not all legs; they are fat and juicy.”

For three days we rode on the outskirts of the mountains, now climbing gentle, wooded slopes, now winding round a stony valley path; every evening we found ourselves at a higher altitude. We were getting into the Kurdish country. Handsome women sat on the wide doorsteps, which often formed the roof of a house beneath,

grinding corn between two flat stones, or baking flat cakes of bread. They wore huge white head-dresses spotlessly clean, covered with silver ornaments, and short crimson zouave jackets. They were disposed to be very friendly, and used to come into our tent with offerings of



MUSICIANS AT A KURDISH WEDDING

oranges and eggs. At one small village we came in for a Kurdish wedding. We happened to arrive just as the bride was being torn, struggling and weeping from her father's house by the bridegroom and his friends. At first we imagined ourselves witnesses of some domestic tragedy, but

we were informed that the display of grief and resistance was part of the ceremony. The bride was plastered over with ornaments, and her head was bedecked with a great crown of feathers. She was put, still sobbing, on a white horse, and led away to the bridegroom's village, to the sound of bagpipes and flutes and the shouts and laughter of a hundred brightly dressed natives.

We rode straight into the Mission compound at Aintab. The Mission has been established here over sixty years, and has a brave show of buildings—a college with five professors, a hospital, an orphanage, a girls' and a boys' boarding school, and a church. The women missionaries are mostly graduates of some American University, and one feels rather behind the times in conversation. Their work fills one with respect—there is no proselytizing about it, their idea is to civilise by education.

From Aintab it is two short days' journey to the Euphrates. We were now in a country of rich red soils covered with olive groves and vineyards. Near the villages small sized black and yellow cattle, brought in from the pastures, munched maize straw in the rough enclosures of reed or straw round the bouses. The road was lined with signs of primitive cultivation and luxuriant crops, evident even in these winter

months. But the peasants seemed miserably poor. They were partners mostly of city men, who provided the seed and the stock and took two-thirds of the produce in payment.

The Euphrates is visible a long way ahead as it winds southwards. At first you see it as a streak of light across the plain; then slowly you distinguish the banks and the flow of the waters. Then Birejik appears on the opposite side. Its houses, built on a limestone cliff four hundred feet high, rise up above the river tier upon tier; then the black marks on the face of the rock below the houses take on the shape of rock tombs. We descended a long, gentle slope towards the ferry, and found a few buildings on this side also. We waited while great herds of oxen and sheep, going to the market at Killis, were ferried across in the clumsy, flat-bottomed, flat-sided boat, one end of which rises in a high, curved keel. Then our turn came, and one by one our horses plunged into thick mud and up the slippery end of the boat, which lets down to form a gangway. Our horses were jammed up tighter and tighter at the far end as each animal entered the boat; they began kicking and biting at one another. We drew our feet out of the stirrups and bunched them up on our horses' necks to be out of harm's way. There was no

room now for the horses to kick—they were wedged too tight; but they struggled hard. We were shoved off the mud with long paddles, the cranky old boat lurched and wobbled, and we seemed horribly near the water. The stream caught us, and we were wafted down to a lower point on the opposite shore. Then the gangway was let down, and confusion ensued as each animal strove to get its saddle disentangled from the pack saddle of its neighbour and jump ashore. The hindmost landed on the first, who had stuck hopelessly in the mud, the muleteers hit and shouted, and we climbed slowly on to firmer ground and wound up the steep path to the street at the top.

Then we rode over a bleak, stony country, exposed to fierce lashes of wind and rain. Smooth faces of rock lay across the scarcely perceptible path, less slippery for our flat-shod horses than the mud in which they were embedded. We could see nothing ahead but low, rounded hills covered with broken stone. Suddenly yellow dogs sprang from under our very feet, and tall figures emerged out of the bowels of the earth. We had stumbled into the middle of a Kurdish village. The huts were hollowed out of the earth and roofed over with the stones.

The chief of the village welcomes us at the

door of his hut, and we descend the dark passage, blinded by the smoke of the fire. We sit on strips of felt, thankful to be out of the wind and the rain and stretch our frozen hands and feet in the direction of the thickest fumes.

The tears run down our cheeks from the smarting of our eyes, but we hardly notice it, for it is heaven to be out of the bluster outside. Slowly our eyes get more accustomed to the darkness and the fumes, and we find that the hut is full of arms and legs and motionless bodies, and gleaming eyes fixed on our eyes. But they are friendly and curious, and we feel at home.

Then we crawl out to where Arten has prepared hot Maggi soup in the tent. It has been impossible to pitch ours, but they have tied the men's little tent on to the big stones forming the wall of our house and the roof of another; we can see smoke mysteriously crawling out of the crevices of the ground at our feet. A sudden furious gust shakes the whole tent, and a Zaptieh's rifle, leant against the side, falls and upsets the steaming soup. We pick our belongings ruefully out of the little trickling streams of thick liquid, and make a meagre meal by soaking bits of native bread in what remains. Then we get to bed as best we can, and all night long the

wind howls, and the tent flaps, and the dogs sniff stealthily on the other side of the canvas

A hard, broad highroad runs some miles out of Urfa on the side which we were approaching. From the town it looks as if it were going on like that for ever. We stumbled suddenly out of our stony track on to it, where it ends abruptly in the middle of nowhere. The native does not walk on it much, he prefers the soft places at the margin, where the caravans, also shunning it, still make wobbly tracks. At one place, where it passes through a deep gully, the bank has been made up to make a more level run, but even here, as we rode over it, we noticed an old man and a boy driving a couple of mules, slowly crawling up the narrow path down below, which marked the line of the original road.

We could see Urfa some little way ahead of us, and wondered whether the missionaries would have heard of our arrival through their friends at Antab. For the post travelled quicker than we did, it had passed us days ago, borne at a gallop by two mounted men.

"If ever we wanted cleaning up," I said, "it is at this moment, what with the rain and the mud and the soup and the fumes, we are almost unfit to be seen even by a missionary."

The words were hardly out of my mouth

when a party of some twenty mounted soldiers appeared in the distance. As they got nearer they fired a volley into the air and ranged up in a line down the road. The captain rode up and saluted us. There was no mistaking it. We were Royalties once more.

The captain explained that the Governor was sending his carriage for their Royal Highnesses to make their entry into the town, and that he was expecting to receive them at the Government House. The carriage appeared up the road—a smart landau with red cushions, drawn by two splendid Arab horses, and followed by outriders in uniform.

In we got. It is very difficult under such circumstances to feel the least royal. We were only conscious of our dishevelled looks and dirty clothes. We made Hassan get in with us, for he always had the air of a prince. The driver cracked his whip, and we went off at a great pace, headed by the captain and Zaptiehs, including our own escort, and followed by the outriders. Borne along in the cavalcade came Arten on his mule, looking worse than any of us, in a seedy old black overcoat, and a red scarf round his neck. The inhabitants of Urfa lined the streets and waved and cheered lustily. Flags and decorations were hung out. We bowed hard—

it was getting easier to forget our dirty clothes. I began to wonder if indeed we were not Royalties. Why not? Hassan looked more princelike than ever, sitting opposite to us, very erect and very gravely gracious, acknowledging salutes.

At the main entrance to the town a smiling Armenian on a mule obstructed the way and frantically waved a letter. The cavalcade stopped, and riding up to the carriage he shoved a well-thumbed envelope into our hands. It was from the lady missionary, they told us.

"The Government," she wrote, "are making great preparations for your entertainment; but I hope that you will not despise such hospitality as my house affords, and that you will spend your time in Urfa with me."

What were the Government going to do with us? Once more I became conscious of our outward appearance. We sent a verbal message to say we would call later, and then we are dashed on again—the smiling Armenian whacking his mule and trying to keep pace with the formal, solemn officers.

Finally we drew up in front of the Government buildings. A red carpet was unrolled before us, over which we walked gingerly in our muddy boots between rows of salaaming Turks.

Hassan stalked after us, grave and dignified, returning salaams

We were received by an official, corresponding to the Mayor of the town, and his secretary X tried to deliver the sentences she had been concocting as we were driven through the streets, but the general bewilderment of the situation and the uncertainty as to what we were expected to do rendered intercourse more difficult than usual. We were almost at our wits' end when the Head of the Education Department appeared on the scene. He talked French fluently, and explained that rooms had been prepared for us in the building, and that the Pasha expected us to be his guests. After giving us tea, and thereby showing familiarity with the customs of foreign Royal personages, they conducted us to the Governor. He was of a very different type from those we had previously seen. A young, pleasant mannered, intelligent Turk, he received us in a reserved, Western way, with no flowery greetings.

Hassan had whispered to us that we had better camp outside as usual, so we declined as best we could his offers of hospitality. The Head of the Education Department, instructed by his chief, said the Pasha was grieved at our decision. Would we not reconsider it?

We were causing his Excellency intense disappointment. His Excellency indeed looked crestfallen; and we would also have enjoyed being royally entertained, but we knew Hassan's judgment was never at fault, and thought it best to be on the safe side. We were also conscious of the fact that in all probability this was but a polite form of spying, for Urfa is the centre of the district where the worst Armenian massacres took place. European visitors, therefore, especially those who say they are "travelling solely for their health" in all the discomforts of winter, are suspected of being mere gleaners of damaging facts.

So we only accepted his Excellency's invitation to dine, and taking leave of him for the moment, we were escorted to the Mission-house by the officers and Zaptiehs who had formed our escort, led by the smiling Armenian on the mule.

Thus ended our triumphal entry into Urfa, which some call the ancient city of Abraham—"Ur of the Chaldees."

CHAPTER IX.

HARRAN : THE LAND OF ABRAHAM.

“AND Terah took Abram his son, and Lot the son of Haran his son's son, and Sarai his daughter-in-law, his son Abram's wife; and they went forth with them from Ur of the Chaldees, to go unto the land of Canaan; and they came unto Haran, and dwelt there.” And it happened that we, sojourning in this land, bethought ourselves of this journey of Abraham; we also, therefore, arose one morning and took two horses of the horses of Ur, and three Zaptiehs also upon horses. We set our servants upon mules, and departed across the plain to visit this Harran, the city of Nahor. And there came with us a lady of the American Mission and her servant Jacobhan and a young Armenian friend; and they also were upon mules. And we all rode together across the plain of Mesopotamia, of which it is written: “When corn comes from Harran, then there is plenty; when no corn comes, then there is hunger.” And even as we

rode the villagers were gathering in barley, the clean white straw with its well-filled heads; and from time to time we came also upon a couple of sleek-skinned oxen drawing the wooden plough through the soil, making the furrows for the next year's seed; and the soil, where it was turned, was of a rich red colour, beside the yellow stubble which was yet unbroken. The villages stood at the space of one hour's ride apart, and by the side of their bell-shaped huts we saw mounds of such a size that they covered as much ground as the villages themselves; and each of these mounds was of a rounded shape. And looking across the plain as we rode, as far as we could see, we saw also many such mounds far distant upon the horizon.

And we said to Hassan, "Wherefore these mounds?" And he answered and said, "Behold, Effendi, you see these villages at the space of one hour's ride apart, each with its cornfields and its unbroken stubble, its pasture and its flocks. So it was in the days when Abraham and Terah passed this way. But these villages that we see of the bell-shaped huts were not the villages that Terah and Abraham saw, for they are now buried under these mounds."

Now Harran is eight hours across the plain from Ur. For four hours we rode until we came

JACOB'S WELL, HARRAN.



to Rasselhamur, a village by the side of a stream, where we ate and drank and rested awhile, and yet another four hours we rode from Rasselhamur to Harran.

Now consider the journey of Terah and Abraham. There were his women and his children, his camels, his man-servants and his maid-servants, his asses, his oxen and flocks of sheep; and they would cause him to delay on the road, for they cannot be overdriven: yet, even as the Arab tribes journey to-day, the caravan of Terah and Abraham would reach this Harran on the second day after they left Ur of the Chaldees. The land of Canaan, the land towards which they journeyed, would still be far distant.

The sun was yet high in the heavens when the walls of the city of Harran rose up before us; and as we rode through the fields without the city walls we looked, and behold there was a well in the field, and near it were gathered flocks of sheep and herds of cattle, for it was out of that well that they watered the flocks. And it was evening, the time that the women go out to draw water; and we drew rein and watched them, even as Jacob watched Rachel. And these daughters of the men of the city were dark-eyed and blue-smocked; they balanced their pitchers on their heads; and they went down

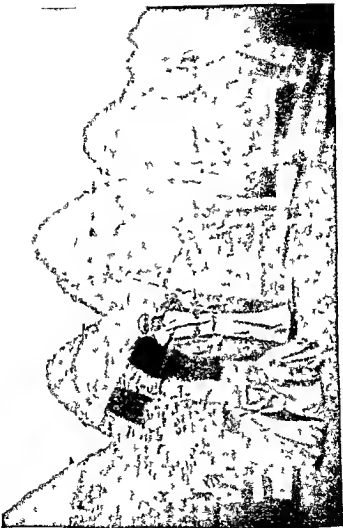
into the well down the slippery stones which were worn by the feet of generations. And on beholding the strangers some of them ran back, even as Rebekah on beholding the servant of Isaac, and told their mothers, and some of them, even as Rachel on beholding Jacob, emptied their pitchers into the troughs and bade us water our horses. And the herdsmen gathered themselves together and looked at us in silence, and their look was long and straight, like the look of those who have the habit of looking far, as far as where the sun sinks on the horizon, and we, wondering, held our peace. Of what availed it that we should vex ourselves as to whether this indeed were the Harran where Teroh stayed on his way to the land of Conaan? Here are we in the fertile regions, without the walls of a city, by the side of a well where the maidens come down to fetch water, and where the flocks are gathered at the going down of the sun. And we bethought ourselves of those ancient days, and we said unto the herdsmen, even as Jacob said unto the herdsmen as they tended the cattle of Laban, "Whence are ye?" And they answered us, saying, "Of Harran are we."

And looking about us we saw also the black tents, the good camel hair tents such as the

Arabs use ; and they stretched out from the side of the watering-place ; and on the ground in front of them the young children rolled amongst the bleating flocks and herds. And the shepherds, haughty and silent, walked in and out amongst the flocks and herds. And their cloaks were of sheepskin, long and squarely cut ; they hung from their shoulders, reaching nearly to the ankles. And looking at them we thought of Abraham, who had left this city for the Land of Promise ; of Isaac, who sent his servant to seek out Rebekah ; and of Jacob, who beheld Rachel even on this spot tending the flocks of sheep and herds of cattle for her father Laban.

And as we tarried there came out a messenger from the city, and he said, " Why standest thou without ? we have prepared a house and room for thy horses." And turning our horses' heads, we followed him and rode into the city.

Looking about us as we rode through the city, many and ancient were the ruins that we saw, showing that Harran had been great indeed in her time ; and there stands to this day a four-sided tower, the walls of which are perfect even now ; and at the summit of this tower the bricks are exceeding hard, and of a bright yellow colour speckled with black spots. And still riding in and out amongst the hell-shaped huts we came



A HUT AT HARRY

at last to the ruins of a great castle Our good horses picked their way amongst the columns which were fallen, of which there were many, and under the massive stone arches which were not yet fallen And we came at last to an open space right in the midst of the castle, and on this space the grass grew green amongst the fallen stones And, dismounting, we climbed yet a little farther, until we came to a room in the walls, well covered in and newly built up with stones, so that neither wind nor rain could enter in And at the door of this well built room stood the Sheikh, and he welcomed us, bowing after the fashion of his country, and we also greeted him, bowing after the fashion of our country He bade us welcome, and said that meat and drink would be laid before us, and provender should be found for our horses And we rejoiced, for we were exceeding hungry But the sheep was yet roasting on the great fire in a hut in the ruins of the castle below, and we said to Jacobian, ' Send these men away, for we are weary and would rest awhile ' And taking Hassan only with us, we climbed up to where the ruins of a great tower looked away over the plain, even the plain over which we had ridden and beyond also on the other side farther than where we had ridden Below lay the ruins

of the great city, and between them the little bell shaped huts, but above us there was nothing but the sky. And looking away from the city, over the walls and over the plain even unto the far horizon where the sun was now setting—for the day was far spent—I said unto Hassan: “What think you, Hassan? Can this indeed be the city whence Abraham departed; and think you that this is the plain over which Jacob fled with his women and children, his men-servants and his maid-servants, his asses and camels, his cattle and his sheep?”

Hassan knit his great brows and pondered awhile, and then he made answer: “What matters it, Effendi, whether this was the city of Abraham, and whether this was the plain over which Jacob fled before the wrath of Laban? Look down below and see these fallen ruins, which are all that is left of the great nations who conquered this city in the generations that have passed; and look down again, and you will see the miserable huts of the people who are left. What do they care for the great people who have lived and died within these walls, where you and I are sitting? In a short time they also will be dead, and you and I will be dead, and therefore why should we care whether or not this was the city of Abraham?

for, where Abraham is, there shall we soon be also."

As he was speaking we heard a shout from below, and looking down we saw Jacobhan beckoning to us, for the meat was now served. And we made haste to come down, and entered the room. Here on the earthen floor stood a well-filled bowl, all hot and smoking, for the meat was mixed with rice well cooked in fat. Now Jacobhan fetched a little red carpet and spread it on the floor by the side of the bowl, and on this we sat, crossing our legs after the fashion of the country.

And they brought us flat cakes of bread, which we dipped into the bowl; and scooping out the rice and meat, we ate it thus, for we had neither spoons nor forks. And round about us sat the dark-eyed Arabs in the white robes. When we had finished eating, one of them rose and fetched a pitcher of water and another brought a bowl, and they poured water over our hands until they were clean. Then, making way for those who had not yet eaten, we caused the carpet to be spread on the far side of the room, where, lying on it, we watched the men eating, gathered round the bowl. Now, when all had finished, one removed the empty bowl and another fetched a brush and swept the floor, for much

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rice had been spilt about. Then each man folded his cloak, and sitting back against the wall, gazed at us out of the dark corners.

But Jacobhan and his young friend had no mind to sit thus quiet all the evening. For they were not as the Arabs are, content to smoke and make no sound. "Give us some song," he said to the assembled company, "that we may make merry, for the night is yet young."

And they pushed forward, out of the far corner, a young man who seated himself at our feet. After looking at us awhile, there being no sound in the room, he began to sing softly; and these are the words that he sang, as they were told to us later by Jacobhan. "As the swallows from a far country, winging their way from the north to the south, so you come to us for the day, and on the morrow you are gone. You have the soft eyes of a dove, your hair is of silken threads, and your skin is as the soft skin of the pomegranate. Your little feet are as the feet of swift gazelles, and they will bear you hence so that your going will be as swift and silent as your coming. Oh, may the snows come in the morning to stay your going away! for my heart will be sick when you are no longer here, and my eyes no longer behold your eyes. The land will mourn and be desolate, the flocks of

the field will wither, and the waters of the river will dry up in the wilderness."

When the words of the song were finished a silence fell upon us all; and the silence was so long in the quiet stillness of night that many of us fell half asleep sitting there in the dark room. And one by one the company glided out softly into the night, until we were left only with our own men. There numbered thirteen of us in all, and wrapping ourselves each in his blanket we lay on the hard floor until morning.

* * * * *

Now on the morrow the son of the Sheikh came to us and said,—

"My father sends you word he will be absent until evening, for he rode away this morning two hours before the rising of the sun. To-night, however, he prepares a feast for you, and will return, with glad tidings for his people. He bids me meanwhile ask of the ladies what their pleasure will be to-day; and I am at their commands."

And we said to the son of the Sheikh,—

"Take now thy father's lance and these our horses, and we pray thee call out one of your companions and let us see how the men of your country fight their enemies."

And the young chief, nothing loth, fetched the

long spear which stood at the door of his father's house and he mounted one of our horses, and he called another youth, and they rode out together into the field, without the city walls. And we climbed up upon the high walls of the castle which looked over the field, that we might have the better view. And the two young men set their lances and rode their horses hard at one another, first to the one side and then to the other, now wheeling round, now holding the spear aloft, shouting with loud cries. And their cries were mingled with the cries of all the assembled company, and we also shouted with the others. For the space of an hour or more did they fight thus with one another, until they and their horses were weary, but we were not weary with watching them.

As we were feasting that day at the time of the setting of the sun, the Sheikh entered the room where we sat, and greeted us.

And we, speaking through Jacobhan, said to him, "Has your business been well?" And he said, "Very well, to day is a great day for myself and for my people."

And we said, "Tell us, we pray thee, how that is?" And he seated himself in our midst, and he told us how his tribe had offended the great Kurdish chief, Ibrahim Pasha, who lived not

far distant. Some amongst them had stolen camels and mules belonging to his people. The wrath of Ibrahim Pasha was very great, and he caused his men to harass their men, and their beasts were no longer safe. Now the Sheikh knew not which among his people were the offenders, but after a year had gone by there came certain of his tribe to him and said, "Behold these camels and mules, are they not those which were stolen from Ibrahim Pasha? We pray thee restore them, that we may no longer live in fear of having ours stolen." Thus it was that on this same day the Sheikh had ridden out with his men, driving these animals, and had delivered them back to the Pasha. So now they would no longer live under fear of his displeasure, for those who offended Ibrahim Pasha had no mercy at his hands; but those who pleased him had much kindness shown them.

And we and the whole company rejoiced together over the good deed that had been done that day, and there was much feasting and singing that night.

On the morrow we mounted our horses once more and rode away through the bell-shaped huts and past the ancient ruins, over the rich plains, back again into the city of Ur, at the foot of the gray hills.

CHAPTER X.

THAT UNBLESSED LAND, MESOPOTAMIA.

WE were encamped in the khan, the native inn, at Severeck, a dismal town in the dismal wilds of Mesopotamia. The weather and the depth of mud made it impossible for us to pitch our tent outside, and the dirty, windowless sheds round the courtyard, which afforded the only sleeping-place, were not inviting; so we had fixed our tent in a covered passage by tying the ropes to the pillars supporting the roof. The Zaptiehs deputed to guard us for the night hung about the door, plying Hassan and Arten with questions as to our sanity. Why should two foreign ladies choose the depth of winter to travel between Urfa and Diarbekr along the caravan route which had been long deserted owing to the raids of the Kurds? I had often asked myself the same question during the last few days, but had not yet thought of an answer.

A pale, dishevelled young man in semi-European clothes slouched into the courtyard

and joined the group. The Zaptiehs spoke roughly to him, and he gave a cringing reply. He forced his way past them up to me.

"*Moi parle Français*," he said, with an accent corresponding to his grammar.

"So it seems," I answered, in the same language.

"To morrow I travel with you," he went on.

"Indeed!" I answered, stiffly.

"Yes, you and my mother and sisters will go in a cart, and I and my brother will ride your horses."

I made a closer inspection of the young man, but could detect no signs of insanity that would account for his strange talk.

"Who are you?" I said.

"I am an Armenian," he answered. "I have a travelling theatre. We want to get to Diarbekr, and have been waiting here for weeks for an opportunity to join a caravan, the road is so unsafe that no one dares pass this way now, and if we do not go with you we may be here for months. You will start at seven to morrow morning, and —"

"We shall start when it suits us," I replied, "and stop when we have a mind. We shall not do the regular stages to Diarbekr. We shall be three days on the way."

You must go in two days," he persisted, we cannot afford to be so long on the road "

I began to get angry

Go away, strange young man," I said, " and don't bother me any more "

I will have everything ready," he said

You may make your own arrangements," I rejoined, ' if you wish to follow us on the road It is a public way, but understand that we have nothing to do with you We start when we like stop when we wish, ride our own animals, and call our souls our own "

My soul is Christian," he said anxiously, as I moved off, are you not my sister ? "

Young man," I said sternly, " we may be brothers and sisters in spirit, and we may be travelling along the same road to heaven, but please understand that we travel to *Diarbekr* on our own horses and not in our sisters' carts "

Next morning we left the town at sunrise, and outside the town we found the whole of the Armenian theatre party ready to accompany us A covered cart concealed the mother and daughters we caught glimpses of tawdry garments and tousled heads Another cart was piled with stage scenery and cooking pots Three or four men were riding mules, and there were an equal number on foot The men were dressed

in flimsy cotton coats, showing bright green or red waistcoats underneath, and tight trousers in loud check patterns; they wore Italian bandit-looking hats, and their sbirts seemed to end in a sort of frill round the neck, suggesting the paper which ornaments the end of a leg of mutton. The whole get-up seemed singularly unsuitable as they plunged ankle-deep through the mud. Patches of snow lay in the hollows of the road; a furious gale was driving sleet at right angles into our faces; it was bitterly cold.

We rode for hours through a dreary country of broken gray stoaes, with no sign of vegetation or life of any kind. At last we arrived at a collection of tumble-down deserted huts, hardly distinguishable from the rest of the country until we were actually amongst them. We were cold and wet, and had scarcely come half-way to our destination; but as neither of us could bear long hours in the saddle without rest or food, we called a halt here to recruit. The Zaptiehs forming our escort begged us not to stop. They could not understand the strange ways of these mad foreigners, who not only travelled in such weather, but sat down to picnic in it instead of pushing on to the shelter of the khan at the journey's end. But we were inexorable, and they reluctantly fastened the horses on the sheltered

side of the remaining walls, against which they stood with their backs tightly pressed, drawing their ragged coats closely round them. The village had been but lately ransacked and destroyed by Ibrahim Pasha, the Kurdish chief. He was still abroad in the neighbourhood, and any loitering on the road increased the chances of our falling in with him or some of his stray bands. The knowledge of this and the discomforts of the journey made the men fretful and anxious. We picked out the least dilapidated looking house and clambered over fallen stones and half-razed walls until we found a roofless room which boasted of three undestroyed angles. In one of these the cook tried to make a fire with the last remnants of charcoal; we huddled in another, to avoid, if it could, the blast which rushed across the broken doorways and whistled through the chinks of the rough stone walls. The carts, accompanied by their bedraggled followers, rumbled heavily past us; the noise gradually died away as they disappeared in the distance; desolation reigned on all sides.

We managed to boil enough water to make tea, and then, yielding to the men's protests, we mounted and rode on. Hour after hour passed; the driving wind hurled the hailstones

like a battery of small shot right into our faces; the rain collected in pools in the folds of my mackintosh, and I guided their descent with the point of my riding-whip. The drop which fell intermittently from the overflowing brim of my hat had been the signal for a downward bob to empty the contents; but now the wet had soaked through, and I let it run down my face unconcernedly. We were a silent and melancholy band. X rode in front, with her chin buried in her coat collar; the hump in her shoulders betokened resigned misery. The soldiers' heads were too enveloped to allow any study of their expressions, but the outline of their soaked and tattered garments bespoke discomfort and dejection.

The pale-faced little officer, straight from the military school at Constantinople, urged his horse alongside mine. "Nazil?" he said. It was a laconic method, essentially Turkish, of saying "How?"—*i.e.*, "How are you?" "How's everything?" "Ill," I answered. "Aman," he groaned. "How many bours more?" I asked. "Half an hour," he said. "Look, the khan is there." I raised my head to follow the direction of his pointed whip; the jerk sent a trickle of wet down the back of my neck, and the rain blinded my eyes.

The officer gave an order to a Zaptieh. The man tightened the folds of his cloak round him, and, digging his heels into the sides of his white mule, darted suddenly ahead. The crick in the back of my neck made it too painful for me to turn my head to look, but this must mean that we were near the khan, and that he had gone on to announce our arrival. Visions of being otherwise seated than in a saddle faintly loomed in my brain; I hardly dared wander on to thoughts of a fire and something hot to drink. We turned at right angles off the track and plunged into a bed of mud which led up to the door of a great, square, barrack-looking building, with a low, flat roof and a general air of desolation. The Zaptieh stood grimly at the door. "Full," he said. Nevertheless we forced our way through the narrow entrance, and found ourselves in the usual square courtyard. The whole enclosure, inches deep in mud and indescribable dirt, was crowded with camels and mules and haggard, shivering men, with bare legs and feet and dripping, ragged cloaks. The officer laid about him right and left with his riding-whip and ordered up the innkeeper. "You must find room for us," he said; "I am travelling with great English Pashas." The innkeeper waved his hand towards the seething, jostling mass of men and

animals. "It is impossible," he said; "I have already had to turn away one caravan. If we made way for the Pashas there would still be no room for their men and horses. But they are welcome to what shelter there is."

We gazed with dismay at the reeking scene.

"How far is it to the next stage?" asked X.

"Two hours," was the answer.

"We had better get on to it, then," she said, and turned her horse's head outwards. We followed in silent dejection. The wretched animals, who had been pricking their ears at the prospect of food and rest, had to be thrashed out on the road again. We waded back through the mud and turned our faces once more to the hiting blast and driving rain.

The track we followed was apparent only to the native eye; we seemed to be going at random amongst the loose stones. One had not even the solace of being carried by an intelligent and sure-footed beast who could be trusted to pick its own way. The hired Turkish horse has a mouth of stone, and his brain resembles a rock. Left to himself he deliberately chooses the most impossible path, until it becomes so impossible that he stops and gazes in front of him in stupid despair, and you have to rouse yourself and take the matter in your own hands. His one display



HASSAN.

in strange contrast with the silent waiting of the dumb animals, for whose shelter their respective owners were fighting with clenched fists and discordant voices. Then the rush of mealtime fell on all: men and animals, side by side, were busy satisfying their bodily needs. We shut the door on the scene, finding smoke preferable to cold and publicity. It suddenly burst open, and a camel's hindquarters backed into the room, upsetting the pot of water on the fire. We had been anxiously waiting for it to boil with the open teapot ready to hand. The men threw themselves upon the animal and pushed it back; they pushed and hit and swore; it was ejected; the fire hissed itself out and the smoke cleared. A dishevelled-looking official in uniform peeped through the door: "The Governor's salaams, and do the Princesses require anything?"

Hassan courteously returned his salute. He was now seated cross-legged by the dying fire, sorting nuts from tobacco which had been tied up together in a damp pocket-handkerchief. With the air of a king on his throne he graciously waved his hand towards a slimy saddle-bag: "Welcome; sit down." The man sat down, carefully drawing his ragged coat round his patched knees.

"The ladies' salaams ta his Excellency; they are very pleased for his inquiry, and send many thanks. They have all they require."

The man departed, no doubt to glean information about us from the members of our cseart. The cook came in with a pleasing expression.

"What will you have for supper?" he said.

"What can we have?" we answered, with the caution arising from lang experience of limited possibilities.

"What you wish," he said, with as much assurance as if he was presenting a huge bill of fare. I knew what one could expect in these places.

"Get a fowl," I said.

"There is nat one left here," he answered.

"Eggs, then," I suggested, with the humour of desperation.

"Na fowl, how eggs?" he answered with pitying superiority.

"Well, we will have what there is," I said faintly.

"There is nothing," he answered cheerfully.

Was there nothing left of our stores? I rummaged in the box which held them. Everything was wet and slimy: a few bars of chocolate were soaked in Bovril from a broken bottle; a sticky tin held the remains of a native jam; two dirty linen bags contained respectively

little tea and rice. A disgusting-looking pasty mess in what had once been a cardboard box aroused my curiosity. Could it be—yes, it had once been, flour. I calmly thought the matter out.

“X,” I said, “will it be best to eat chocolate with the Bovril thrown in, or to drink Bovril with the chocolate thrown in?”

“Don’t talk about it,” said X; “cook everything up together, and let us hope that the flavours will be merged beyond recognition.”

We put a tin of water on the fire and threw in the rice and flour. The chocolate and Bovril were added, after carefully picking out the bits of broken bottle. Hassan fumbled in the wide leathern belt which he wore round his middle; the space between himself and the belt served as a pocket where he carried all his goods. With an *salaam* of unspeakable pride he produced a small, thingy grimy object, which he held aloft in

Hassan was now seen we all shouted in excitement. He sorting nuts for pulling the long, dagger-like knife up together in he proceeded to cut the treasure. With the air of a king he flung them fall one by one into the pot. He waved his hand to the cook sat stirring it with a spoon. “Welcome; sit down,” he kept raising spoonfuls out carefully drawing his ragged thick liquid dribbled patched knees. He smiled complacently,—

"There is rice, there is chocolate, there is English soup, there is onion, there is water."

When the mess seemed to be cooked he lifted the pot off the fire and placed it between us. "Very good—very," he said encouragingly, and handed us each a spoon. X swallowed a few mouthfuls.

"We must leave some for the men," she said, with a look of apology, as she put the spoon down. She picked up a piece of leathery native bread and started chewing it.

I could not find it in my heart to tell her the history of that piece of bread, which I had been following with some interest for several days. It was always turning up, and I recognized it by a black, burnt mark resembling a figure 8. It had first appeared on the scene early in the week; we had been enjoying a lavish meal of chicken legs and dried figs, and I had wastefully rejected it as being less palatable than other bits. The men had tried it after me, pinching it with their grimy fingers; but being dissatisfied with it they had thrown it, along with other scraps, into a bag containing the cooking utensils. The next day it had appeared to swell our diminishing supply, and had been left on the ground. But as we rode away Hassan's economical spirit overcame him; he dismounted again and slipped

it into his pocket, where it lay close to various articles not calculated to increase the savouriness of its flavour. I was determined to see its end and when A laid down half—no doubt meaning it for my share—I threw it on the fire.

It's hardly the time to waste good food," said A.

The cook picked it out, blew the ashes off, and rubbed it with his greasy sleeve. He offered it to me.

Eat it yourself,' I said magnanimously, 'I have had enough.' But he wrapped it carefully in one of the dirty linen bags and put it on one side.

To morrow," he said.

And so we sat, a mass of wet clothes, saddles, cooking pots, remains of food, ends of cigarettes, men, unable to move without treading on one or other of them, tears rolling down our cheeks from the fumes of the fire, thankful we could not see what dirt we were sitting in or what dirt we had been eating.

We rolled our rugs round us and lay on the sodden earth floor. Hassan turned the men out and stretched himself across the doorway. Dogs moaned, men snored, outside the storm raged unceasingly.

CHAPTER XI.

AFLOAT ON GOATSKINS.

WE rode into Diarbekr on Christmas Day, arriving just in time to share the plum-pudding at the house of the British Vice-Consul.

They say of Diarbekr that its houses are black, that its dogs are black, and that the hearts of its people are black—and they say so truly. When you catch sight of it in the distance you are impressed by the blackness of its walls, built of a black volcanic stone. When you get inside, the people look dourly at you, and the Zaptiehs ride closer together. But this may be because they have no other choice, the streets being often only four feet across. It is quite easy to cross a street from on high by jumping from one roof to another; and it is certainly cleaner, for down below you are ankle deep in mud, in which great boulders are embedded—relics, perhaps, of ancient pavement or fallen houses. If you want to take the air at Diarbekr, you walk round and round the flat roof of your house and watch the

life of your neighbours on adjoining roofs, or else closely followed by armed guards you ride out into the bleak stony country

A week later we sat on the banks of the Tigris by the Roman bridge which spans the river just below the black walls of Diarbekr. The raft on which we were about to embark was moored to



OUR RAFT READY TO START

the shore and the men were loading our belongings. A dancing bear stumped about to the tune of a bagpipe made of one of the skins which answer so many purposes in the East. When inflated they can be used either for carrying water for people inside or for carrying people on water outside. We were using 260 of them in this latter way. They were tied to two layers

of poplar poles put crossways, forming a raft about eighteen feet square. At one end were two small butts made of felt stretched across upright poles; the fore cad was weighted down with bags of merchandise laid side by side across the poles to form a rough floor. The two raftsmen waded in and out with a great appearance of hurry, but without seeming to accomplish anything.

"Can't you hurry the men up?" said X.

"No," I answered; "we are in the East."

"You might try," she said; "you always leave me all the talking to do."

"They do not understand my Turkish," I said apologetically.

"It would not take you long to learn enough for that," went on X.

"I do know the swears," I answered humbly, and I stood up amongst the men and delivered myself of them.

"Quick! quick! the Pasha is angry!" said the men.

Our crew had assembled; there were our two personal attendants, Hassan and Arten. Hassan was now our interpreter, for, although he could only talk Turkish, he could interpret our signs to other Turks until we learnt the language. Arten, we found, was more Armenian than cook,

and sang us Christian hymns in his native language when we felt low after meals. Then there were two raftsmen, they were Kurds, we had yet to discover their qualifications. Two Zaptiehs forming our escort made up the number, they wore ragged uniforms and carried antiquated rifles which served many useful purposes, but had forgotten how to eject bullets.

'Ready, ready,' shouted the raftsmen, and we boarded the raft. The rope which had fastened it to the shore was hauled in, and we drifted slowly out into the centre of the muddy stream. We were followed by another raft, laden with bags of merchandise, which was coming with us to share the protection of our escort.

We went into the sleeping hut to ascertain its possibilities. Boards had been nailed across the poles to form a floor, and on this was spread a thick native felt mat. Dwellers on land little know the feeling of luxury of being able to drop all the things addicted to dropping, especially when dressing with the knowledge that they would not disappear for ever in the depths of the Tigris, the luxury of being able to walk in the ordinary method of placing one foot in front of the other.

This was not the case in the open part of the

because you need not fold anything up, but can stuff it in and give the bag a shake, and it is easy to unpack, if you do it in a whole hearted manner, standing in the centre of a large room or a vast desert where you can turn it upside down and spill everything out on the ground. But under ordinary circumstances the bundle of hay with the needle in it is nothing to this sack with your clean handkerchief in it. X and I had a mutual understanding never to attack a sack while the other was within hearing, but whenever she appeared in a half fainting condition and asked the cook why on earth tea was so late, I knew what she had been doing. She had asked me, as a personal favour, not to attack my sack in the morning because it was a pity to have the whole day spoilt, and if I did it in the evening, to go to bed before she did.

Having examined our quarters, I arranged a rug on the open part of the raft and sat down to take in the surroundings. Arten was unpacking cooking pots in the second hut, and the other men sat about on the sacks smoking silently. The boatmen sat on a pile of sacks in the middle and worked the oars which served to steer the raft and keep it in the swift part of the current. The oars consisted of young willow trees, with short strips of split willow bound on

one end with twigs to form the blade ; they were tied on to rough rowlocks made of twisted withies wound round heavily weighted sacks.

The Tigris at this point is singularly hideous. There was not a single blade of vegetation to be seen anywhere ; the country was a stretch of mud hills and stony desert, and the mud banks of the river were only relieved by the hosts of water-birds that darted in and out or waded in the shallows. The high black cliff, crowned by the massive black walls of Diarbekr and fringed by a swampy tract of willows, rose up sharply above the mud flats. As we were carried along the winding course of the sluggish river a higher mud bank shut it altogether from our view.

We were drifting into an unknown world at the mercy of unknown Kurds. We were alone with the birds and the mud banks and the rippling waters.

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The snow-capped mountains of Kurdistan were just visible on the horizon line ; toward them rolled wave after wave of low brown tracts of land, utterly destitute of any form or sign of life. Behind, as in front, like the coils of a shining serpent, wound the thin white line of the Tigris. Now and then the raftsmen dipped their oars quietly into the water, and with a few

strokes twisted the raft into the straightest part of the river, otherwise we were helpless, in the hands of a current which made us bide its time as it slunk round corners, or sped us faster when it gurgled impatiently over a long reach, where gray rock vied with the endless gray mud. The ripple of the water, the splash of the oars, the crooning songs of the raftsmen, all added to the sense of drowsy contemplation already established by the surrounding view. Everything was in harmony. Isolated herons fished from slippery stones, gazing with such intentness into the passing water that they hardly deigned to raise their heads towards us, and if they ever deemed it wiser to move out of our way, they would do so by a very deliberate walk on to the shore, after fixing a resentful, half wondering stare upon us. Flocks of black ducks, suddenly disturbed round a corner, would rise, and with a sharp whirr would pass over our heads and drop quietly down on the waters behind, smoothing out their ruffled plumage. Fat, ungainly penguins, sitting in white rows, like surpliced choirs, on the shallow shore, would scuttle farther back along the mud flat and taking up attitudes of doubtful interrogation would stare us out of countenance.

We each had our several occupations when we

felt that it was possible to snatch any time from contemplation. Hassan would retire into the hut at one end of the raft, and sitting cross legged on the floor, would chup up tabacco, whilst one of the Zaptiehs, seated at the door, would roll up the cigarettes. Arten might easily have worked all day, but he seemed to spend most of his time gazing at the brazier on which he occasionally cooked something. At intervals he blew up the live charcoal with measured puffs, or he would sit perilously near the edge of the raft looking at the sky, with the tails of his dirty black overcoat dangling in the water, and holding the dishes in the river until most signs of the last meal were removed from them.

The two raftsmen were obliged to give a certain amount of attention to the task of steering the raft, but they seized every moment they could spare from it, and leaning on their oars, would devote it to contemplation. They pointed out objects of interest, but only in their capacity as local guides, and in a monosyllabic manner in complete harmony with the occasion.

'Christian village,' they would say, without looking round, pointing a thumb over their shoulders in the direction of a group of mud huts, or "Arab" when an encampment of

black tents appeared on the bank. Hassan and the soldiers would respond by slowly turning their eyes in the particular direction, perhaps even going so far as to give vent to a sudden, sharp "Ha!"

CHAPTER XII.

HELD UP.

WE did not always drift along in a smooth and idle manner; the mud banks gave place at times to steep, rocky sides, between which the waters flowed more rapidly, and careful steering with the oars was required to avoid rocks and whirlpools. And here there were not infrequent signs of life: rock-tombs were cut in the walls of the cliff; and we should have liked to stop and examine them further, but it was impossible to moor the raft at such places, and the current hurried us on almost before we were aware of their existence. Now we would catch sight of a wedding procession on the bank; the bride, plastered with feathers and ornaments, being escorted to the bridegroom's village amid a din of music and shouting the sound of which would follow us long after they were lost to view. Now it would be a group of women washing their clothes at the river's edge, heating them on large, flat stones.

Now a solitary horseman would stand motionless on the cliff above, his coloured cloak flowing over his horse's back, hardly concealing the brilliant hues of his embroidered saddle, he would watch us out of sight, and then turn and pursue his lonely road. Now a shepherd boy would be driving in the flocks of sheep and goats at sundown, and his weird calls, and the answering bleat of the animals, would echo and re-echo right away across the distant hills. Men and women on the bank hailed us as we passed. We could only cast one look at them and wave back a hurried and kindly greeting, and they paused for a moment to gaze at us, and then returned to their own pursuits. Meditative oxen, chewing their cud, surveyed us wonderingly from the shore. "Why in such a hurry?" they seemed to say, and we answered, "We are not in a hurry, but we have no power to stop." The eagles overhead peered at us, flapping the great wings with which they flew whither they listed, while we were being swept along uncertain currents. A hidden bird would pour forth his sweet song to cheer us on our way, and the owls utter a dismal note of warning, as of unknown dangers yet to come.

There was some possibility of danger from the Kurds. Our friends, however, had been

decidedly encouraging as we bade them good-bye. "You will probably meet with Kurds," they said; "but if they do shoot at you, it will only be for the fun of sinking the raft. They may rob you and strip you, but if you don't resist they won't kill you." We had felt distinctly elated. We still clung to life; our clothes and provisions were a convenience, but no doubt sheepskins and rice would be always forthcoming if the worst happened. "What would you mind losing most?" I said to X on the third day, as we lay on our backs on the raft, the muddy water rippling very close to our ears. "My hot-water bottle," answered X reflectively. "And you?" "My camera first," I said, after a pause during which I had pictured X alone with the hot-water bottle, "and then my stylo." "Yes," said X sympathetically, "I really don't see how you could get on without them; but perhaps," she added consolingly, "if you persuaded the men that there was an evil spirit inside they would let you keep them." This was a decided inspiration: a hot-water bottle and a camera were obvious resting-places for the evil eye.

We drifted on; the whirls of a slight rapid caught us: the top end of the raft where we lay dived suddenly into the water and then rose again; the bottom end followed suit; we became

bowed for a second, then we were flat once more, and loose things which had started jumping about lay still. I shook the water off my sleeve. "The Pashas like water," volunteered one of the raftsmen, a little, round faced Kurd in a brightly striped coat. "The Pashas are English," answered Hassan, in a tone of dignified rebuke.

The English fear nothing, why should they fear water?" The raftsmen paused in his work; he was plying the two poplar poles, with which he guided the raft past shingles and kept it in the open part of the river. He started rolling up a cigarette. "May it please Allah to spare us from an attack from Ibrahim Pasha," he said devoutly, "or even these Pashas may have cause to fear." Hassan looked at him sternly and with some contempt. "The Pashas are English," he repeated, "and the Pashas are not afraid of Ibrahim Pasha." The raftsmen lit his cigarette and resumed his task. The two Zaptiehs, Ali and Achmet, who had been aroused to a slight attention during the conversation, became listless as before, and puffed away in silence after a simultaneous murmuring of "Aha, aha, Ibrahim Pasha." The remaining occupant of the raft, Arten, alone looked disturbed and uncomfortable. He was continually scanning the horizon, and retired behind the door of the hut whenever a

black spot was visible. He burst into roars of forced merriment, "Ibrahim Pasha! who is afraid of Ibrahim Pasha? Let him come, and we shall give him a warm welcome!" His companions gazed in front of them in stolid, silent contempt.

Silence reigned again; only the splash of the oars was heard and the beating of the water against the skins. Nothing broke the monotony; the river wound its way slowly in and out round mud banks; the country as far as one could see was unbroken, endless mud; the water one drank and washed in and floated on was diluted mud; the villages on the banks were built of mud, the inhabitants were mud colour; the very sky gave one a feeling of mud. It was time for a diversion. Away in the distance, since early morning, there had been a black smudge on the horizon which was slowly taking more definite shape as we followed the course of the shiny loops of the river. We had lazily fixed our eyes in its direction. Almost imperceptibly it had evolved itself into great masses of solid, black, limestone rock; a few more turns of the river and we shot right under them and were suddenly shut inside a narrow black gorge. Bare walls of rock rose straight up on either side, and above a narrow stretch of skyline, with its broken edges

formed by the turreted ends of rock, and in a row on every point, silent, motionless, awe inspiring sat peering down at us, like sentinels on guard great brown vultures of the desert. I shuddered uneasily, an armed brigand flesh and blood could stand, but this penetrating, inhospitable gaze was too uncanny. To appear unconcerned I took out my field glasses and stared back. With deliberate scorn, and of one accord, they slowly spread out their great wings, shook them, soared up in the air, and dropped down the other side of the rocks, or took up a fresh standpoint a little farther removed from the intruders.

We floated rapidly through the gorge. Already, on one side, the rocks were giving way to mud banks, though on the right bank the sides rose steeply in high, jagged cliffs. I lay back with a sense of enjoyment of life and peace. We turned a sharp bend in the river, and I vaguely noticed a native woman carrying a child in her arms. All of a sudden the atmosphere seemed disquieted. The two Zaptiehs had seized their rifles and dropped on one knee as if marking prey, even the unperturbable Hassan was handling a dangerous and antiquated looking weapon. There were men on the shore hailing us, and our boatman was shouting back at them. "Pashas,"

said Hassan in a solemn voice, "put on your hats." I slowly woke to the situation as I obediently donned the sign of our nationality. There were men on each side of the river; they were armed men, and their arms were pointed at us. "Why, X," I exclaimed, "we're held up!" X looked at me with a pitying expression. "You've been rather a long time taking that in," she said. This was not the moment for feeling snubbed; I wished to show that I was now acting with cool deliberation. "X," I said, "before leaving England we took some trouble with revolver practice; with much inconvenience we wore our revolvers all through the wilds of Mesopotamia and Armenia; for some weeks we slept with them, loaded, under our pillows. They are now hanging discarded on the walls of the hut. Do you not think the moment has arrived for giving ourselves some little return for all the bother they have been?" "They have been a bore," assented X; "perhaps it is our duty to have them now." I went and fetched them and solemnly handed X hers. "They are loaded," I said, "but they seem rather sticky and rusty; I wonder if they will go off." "Please point the other way if you are going to try," said X. I could not allow this challenge to my want of knowledge in fire-

set up; their long, black, curly hair hanging down to the collar. They were dressed in bright colours, and armed to the teeth with long knives and pistols, besides the rifles they were flourishing.

"There do not seem to be any villages near," said X. "We shall be very cold if they take our clothes and we cannot get sheepskins." "Yes," I said, "and very hungry if we can get no rice. We have longed for this moment, but there do seem to be inconveniences connected with it." My heart suddenly warmed within me. "X," I said, "isn't this a splendid piece of luck?" "Glorious!" said X; and we gave ourselves up to the full enjoyment of the situation.

We had got into a faster current, and the men had to run to keep up with us. They seemed to be yielding to the importunities of our escort; one by one they dropped behind, and finally, with a few parting yells, stood and gazed at us as we floated on. "X," I said, in a voice struggling with emotion, "they are letting us go!" X's face reflected my disappointment and disgust. "And they did not even fire one little shot!" she said bitterly. "Or try to hurt our skins," I gulped. X tried to take a cheerful view of the situation. "Never mind," she said, "cheer up: we may have another chance; we are not out of their country yet." But I was

not so easily comforted, I wanted some outlet for my disappointment, and seizing my revolver I fired six shots up into the air and flung the weapon across the raft. The reports rang out loud and clear, and the echoes slowly died away in the answering rocks. Artea's white face peered through a chink in the door. X turned to the Zaptiehs and demanded of them a full account of their conversation. "Effendi," said the officer, "it is merchandise they want. They dare not touch the personal effects of the English, they have had some good lessons." "But," I interrupted, "we are loaded with merchandise." "Effendi," said the officer, "we swore by Allah that it was all your luggage, and that if they took it the English Padishah would send his soldiers and kill them all." "Yes," broke in the other Zaptieh, "and we swore that his Excellency the English Consul was on board, and that if they fired a shot he would come out with his great weapon and blow them all into the next world." The little boatman's face beamed with radiant smiles. "Ah! the English are a great people," he said, "with you English we are safe. I have been down the river scores of times, and always at this place I have been robbed. You saw the woman as we turned the corner—she was put there to signal when the rafts were

coming. If you see a woman alone on a bank, you know what you are in for. The river here is narrow and the current slow; you have no chance. On the one side the banks are low, and they can draw the rafts to shore and unload the merchandise while the men on the other side, *high up on the cliffs, cover you with their guns.*"

"Why do you not carry arms?" we said. The man smiled sadly. "Pasha, what are we against these men? If we float on, they sink the raft by shooting at the skins till they burst, and we lose raft and merchandise and all; if we submit quietly, they take what they want and let us go peaceably. Should we fire back at the men on the low bank within our range, we are at the mercy of the men on the cliffs, who have good ambush. No, Allah wishes it. Why should we resist?" There was silence for a few minutes; our boatman slowly rolled up a cigarette. "It is not you English they will harm," he said; "they are afraid of punishment. It is we poor ones, who can get no redress. They take our little all, and know we must submit and they are safe." "Surely you can appeal to the local authorities?" we persisted. The man laughed—a low, quiet laugh. "The Governor!" he said. "Poor man! he is no better off than

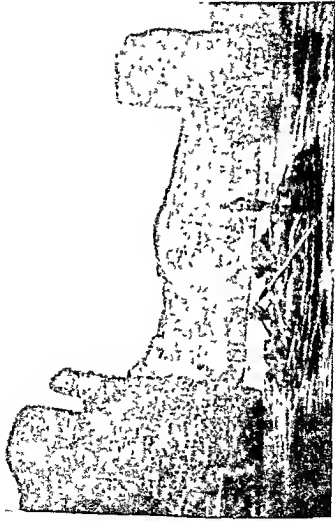
CHAPTER VIII

A RECEPTION AND A DANCE

HASSAN KAIF is the first place of any interest along the banks, and we arrived there early on the fourth day, having floated about eighty miles in that time.

As we approached the village the banks of the river rose perpendicularly in a wall of rock which was riddled with tombs. Many of them seemed to be quite inaccessible, those which had any sort of approach from the land side appeared to be inhabited by Kurds. We passed between the ruined buttresses of a Roman bridge of four arches and then had a view of the whole village on the right bank. The mountains curve away from the river at this point and leave a semi-circular level space, which is occupied by the ruins of an ancient Christian town. At the back, extending right up the curving side of the hill to where the topmost peak, surmounted by a castle, crowns the river, is a vast burial place. The natives live in the tombs and in caves cut

out of the rocks. We landed here and slowly toiled up the stony paths on the face of the rocks, which led over the roof of one habitation to the next above it. Near the top we were met by a local Zaptieh, who guided us to the house of the Governor. We were not sorry to have this opportunity of examining the interior of the dwellings. The house consisted of a single room, into which we stumbled down a dark passage; the walls were roughly levelled off inside, the marks of the chisel being everywhere apparent. A low divan ran down each side of the room. In one corner the rock had been hollowed out to form a cupboard, inside which, through the chinks of a rough wooden door, we caught glimpses of his Excellency's bedding; for the Oriental keeps his bed in a cupboard in the daytime and spreads it on the floor at night. With all the instincts of a wandering tribe, the Turk, however permanent his abode, conducts his household exactly as if it were in the nature of a tent. He lives in one room, sleeping, eating, and doing business. Should he wish to eat, his meal is carried in on a little low table, beside which he squats on the floor; when the meal is finished, the table is carried out and the floor swept. Should he wish to write, he discards the rickety table occasionally found in an official



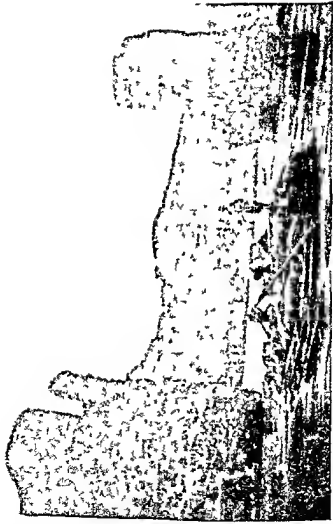
A HAVT BETWEEN THE BUTTRESSES OF A RUINED BRIDGE AT HASSAN KAIR.

dwelling, and writes upon his hand, balancing the ink-pot upon his knee as he sits cross-legged on the floor. When it is time to sleep, his bed is pulled out of the cupboard and laid upon the floor; his slumbers over, it is rolled up and put away again.

The Governor received us with salaams, and taking X by the hand led her to the seat of honour at the top end of the divan; our men ranged themselves below in order of rank, and a few ragged soldiers bung about the door. A servant appeared with cups of coffee, and we were offered cigarettes. Then water-melon and sweets were handed round. Conversation was limited by our small knowledge of Turkish; but X was by this time proficient in the formal modes of greeting.

The Governor inquired calmly "how many times" we had been held up by brigands in his district; a strange satire on Turkish methods of government. There was not a doubt in his mind that we had been waylaid and robbed.

He then took us to visit another house, which boasted of three rooms, all leading out of each other. The first appeared to be the general living- and sleeping-room, absolutely bare save for strips of felt ranged down the far end and a pile of native quilts in a corner; the second



A RAFT BETWEEN THE TOWERS OF A RUINED BRIDGE AT HANSAH KAI

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was dedicated to the animals; and the third, which was almost pitch dark, served as larder and storehouse. We were received by several women, who held us fast by the hands while they showed us their abode with great signs of pride. One of them was a strikingly handsome dark girl, dressed in gorgeous coloured native silks and velvet, and literally plastered with ornaments from the face and hair downwards.

On returning to the raft we were somewhat puzzled by finding it taken possession of by two women, magnificently dressed and closely veiled, accompanied by a man and a woman servant. They were sitting in a row on our beds examining all our belongings complacently.

"We are very pleased to have a visit from the ladies," said X to the local Zaptieh who had accompanied us back to the raft; "but they must go on land now, as we are starting at once."

"But they will travel with you," said the Zaptieh.

"That would be very pleasant," said X, who never forgot to be polite, "but the raft is so small, I am afraid there will be no room for us all, and they will not be comfortable."

"Oh, there is plenty of room," said the man reassuringly. "The ladies need not trouble themselves."

Ali turned to one of our Zaptichs

"Will you explain," she said, "that the raft is ours, and that we are very sorry, but we are afraid we cannot take the ladies with us?"

"It is an arrangement of the Governor's," explained Ali. "he has been waiting for an opportunity to send the ladies to a neighbouring village, and he ordered them to travel with you. They will land before evening."

As there seemed no choice in the matter, we expressed our great appreciation of the honour, and instructed Hassan to keep an eye on their pockets. Hassan, who had looked somewhat perturbed from the outset, had resolutely ensconced himself at the farthest corner of the raft with his back turned to everything. He refused to change his position, and explained to us that the ladies were such very great Pasbas that it would be "shame" for him to look in their direction.

Towards evening we reached a spot where two armed Kurds, with long black curls and magnificent striped coats, stood waiting with saddled horses. The servant woman carefully wrapped the great ladies up in their gaudy silk cloaks and the man servant helped them off the raft and on to the horses. The little party rode away up a lonely looking mountain pass, and as

we floated on we caught occasional glimpses of their bright colours between the rocks, until they disappeared over the crest of a distant hill

That night we moored the raft at Sheveh, a village backed by high hills, the last spurs of a great range of snow mountains, at whose base we had been winding in and out. We arrived at sunset, just as the women were trooping down, with jars on their heads, to fetch water from the river. I went, and sat on a rock above them, and one by one, having filled their jars, they filed up past me, and stopping for an instant, fingered my garments and gently stroked my hair. Many and various questions they asked me, of which I could understand nothing, and they moved on with that free and graceful carriage which is the gift of uncivilised races, balancing the jars on their white veiled heads.

We had finished supper, and had stretched our selves out on the raft under the stars, enjoying the quiet and beauty of the scene. Our boatmen, with those of another raft, had joined forces, and had pitched a tent on the shore close by. Most of the villagers had straggled down to the river, and were sitting mysteriously about in waving white garments. All of a sudden a wild, savage noise of screaming and singing arose.

"The men have bought a piece of meat," said Ali, "and are singing to it."

It was a weird sight: a roaring fire blazed in the gloaming; in the centre hung a large black pot containing the meat which was the object of this adoration. The men had joined hands, and were dancing round the fire in a circle—dark figures in long white flowing robes which waved about in the semi-darkness as their owners flung their feet up or swung suddenly round. All at once the meat dropped on the ground with a prolonged dwindling yell, which finally died off into an expectant silence. The head boatman fished out the meat and began to tear it to pieces with his hands, distributing it amongst his companions. A deathly silence reigned while the carcass was being consumed. This gave place, as time went on, to a murmuring ripple of satisfaction, which developed a little later into bursts of contented song. Then they sprang to their feet and flung themselves once more into a dance.

"Let's join in," said X.

We each seized a Zaptieh by the hand, and were included in the circle. We sprang and kicked and stamped; we turned and hopped and stamped. One man stood in the middle clapping the time with his hands as he led the song. It

was a war dance, the circle broke into two lines, and we dashed against one another. Then the lines receded, and the song became a low murmur as of gathering hordes, whilst our feet beat slow time. The murmur swelled and our feet quickened, louder and louder we shouted, quicker and quicker we moved, and finally with a great roar the two lines dashed against one another. We gave one great stamp all together and stopped dead, another great stamp and a roar, then a hush and the lines receded. Thoroughly exhausted, I fell out of the line while this proceeding was repeated. By this time the moon shone out bright and strong. On one side a great desert stretched away into the starry night, on the other the waters of the Tigris swept darkly past us. The wild shrieks flew up into the clear, silent air. X danced furiously on between Hassan and Ali. Her face was strangely white lit up by the moon, amongst the dark complexions of her companions. They sprang and hopped and stamped, they turned and hopped and stamped, a white robe here, a red cloak there, a naked foot and a soldier's boot, hopping and turning and stamping.

'X,' I said to myself, "you are mad, and I, poor sane fool, can only remember that I once did crotchet work in drawing rooms."

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH AN ENGLISHMAN.

BETWEEN Hassan Kaif and Jezireh, a distance of thirty-five miles, the scenery is very fine. The river winds through narrow gorges with steep walls of limestone rock riddled with rock tombs. Here and there in the black gorges the high turreted rocks would be skirted below with hands of vegetation; little spurts of glistening water shooting over the rocky tops as they dashed down to join the river between masses of ferns, or trickled through beds of green moss. It was months since we had seen anything green, and we feasted our eyes on the unaccustomed luxuriance.

"Pretty view, isn't it?" said a voice in the native tongue at my side. Startled from another world, I turned round. Arten was rubbing some spoons with a dirty cloth, and waved his hands towards the banks.

"Got anything like this in London?" he asked affably.

I looked at him in silence. He dived into the hut with a scared look, and complained later on to X that the other Pasha had an uncertain temper.

The spell of enchantment was broken, but sentiment was in the air with the smell of wet earth and the sound of dripping vegetation, oleander bushes with bright red blossoms stood out against the dark rock, water birds darted in and out, and vultures hovered overhead. I had a sudden desire, awakened by Arten's interruption, to share the emotions called up by the surrounding scene. I glanced at X. She looked fairly sentimental, I thought, lying motionless in her favourite place at the extreme end of the raft, with a dreamy, far away look in her eyes.

"X," I murmured softly, "what does this make you think about?"

X was one of those rare people who always know what they are thinking about. She did not fail me on this occasion.

"It reminds me of Scotland," she said without hesitation. "Why, what does it make you think about?"

But I had stopped thinking about it, and agreed that I had seen places like it in Scotland.

"Pasha," said Hassan, "the boatmen want you not to sit so near the edge of the raft."

"Why," laughed X, "do they think I shall roll over?"

"No," replied Hassan, pointing ahead; "but we are going to shoot a rapid, and they say you will be frightened."

"I would sooner be frightened than go through the awful exertion of moving on this raft," said X, and she gazed placidly at the line of foaming waters which we were rapidly nearing. There was only just room for the raft to rush between hard, sharp-edged boulders of rock, and it seemed as if we should inevitably be dashed to pieces or stranded on one of them.

The Zaptiehs helped with the oars, they and the boatmen keeping up one prolonged yell of "Allah! Allah!" They exerted themselves strenuously—a strange thing for Easterns to do; the raft creaked and rocked and plunged; there was a very disturbing sense of fuss and unseemly exertion on board; the cook was saying his prayers inside; Hassan, with an air of total unconcern, was adding up his accounts; and X, with equal unconcern, was mending her gloves. On such occasions one thinks of one's past sins and the future; I thought of the future. I stood up and leaned my back against the wall of the hut to steady myself.

"X," I roared above the din, "I wonder what there is for supper to-night."

X looked at me with a hored expression. "The same, I should think," she said, "as we had last night and the night before and the night before that. Why this sudden interest in your food?"

"Because," I said, "I have an idea I shall enjoy my supper to-night."

"Yes," said X (she was always sympathetic); "this sort of weather does make one hungry."

Further conversation was prevented by a sudden leap of water and raft right into the air, and with the leap went up a loud cry to Allah, as the men threw themselves, with great determination, on the oars. We shot head downwards into the dark waters past the white froth of foam; there was a moment of turmoil, then everything became very still; the men rested exhausted on their oars, the roaring waters sounded faint in the distance. I looked round: Hassan was still at his accounts; X had finished her gloves, and was lying back with her eyes closed; the cook's prayers had ceased; we were through. The cook came out rubbing his hands jocosely.

"Arten," I said, "your prayers have saved us from some inconvenience."

Arten looked conscious. "What danger has

there been?" he said "Was the Pasha afraid of the waters?"

"No, indeed," I returned, "it was not the Pasha who was afraid of the waters, but she was afraid she might not get her supper to night"

"The Pasha is hungry," said X, "we must have onions as well as potatoes to night"

We arrived at Jezireh, without further adventure, at noon the next day The river Jezeer runs into the Tigris at this point, so that the town can only be reached by wading through the water

We were making preparations to go on shore when we observed a little man being carried across the water on the back of a half naked Arab He had that incongruous look, made up of the European overcoat with a fur collar, the black trousers, and the brown boots, all surmounted by a fez, which we had learnt to associate, curiously enough, both with the office of local Governor and with that of the native Christian Man

In this case our visitor was the Governor He was spilt off the Arab's shoulders on to the raft, and landed in rather an unofficial position We went through the usual pantomime of salaams, and after inquiries as to the health and rank of

our relations he invited us to come on shore and visit the town.

Jezireh is a stronghold of the Kurds; the ragged soldiers about the streets bore their distinguishing mark, a silver star on the forehead. Their chief had been murdered but a year ago, after devastating and burning the whole country round, and under the rule of his weaker son there was a temporary lull in hostilities. But his name was still only mentioned in whispered words of awe, and this not by plundered natives alone, but by Turkish regulars and Turkish officials alike.

On returning to the raft we heard that an English Pasha had just ridden into the town, and that he was coming to visit us. He had met Hassan, who had been buying supplies in the bazaars.

X and I looked at one another. Meeting an Englishman under such circumstances is no doubt, in one sense, an excitement; so would it be to meet a tiger in an English country lane. In a jungle you expect a tiger, and being prepared for his attack you do not resent it. In the same way you are prepared to meet an Englishman on common ground in England, but in an Asiatic wild you are not. For it, and you are therefore terrified.

It was ten days since we had seen ourselves, as the Man would see us, in a glass (and then it was only a missionary's glass), and we had lost nearly all our hairpins in the crevices of the raft.

"Is my face as red as yours?" said X.

The question was evidently the outcome of the thoughts which assailed her mind during the few moments' silence in which we had gazed at each other, wondering whether we really looked like that too.

"Your face is all right," I said—"it's only red in patches; but your hair is disgraceful. How's mine?"

"It's all right," said X, critically; "it's only coming down in patches. But there is no time to do anything; we must brazen it out."

A young Englishman was boarding the raft; he was very spick and span—shaved, brushed, a clean collar, and polished boots.

"You must excuse me for calling upon you in this dishevelled manner," he said as we shook hands; "but travellers have to come as they are. I daresay you can sympathize."

X laughed. "Oh, as far as that goes," she said, "we are all in the same boat."

"Raft," I corrected in a nervous flutter.

The Young Man looked at me and smiled. I

realised that he thought I was trying to make a cheap joke such as one might have been capable of in the country lane

I must introduce myself,' he went on "I am Captain F—— of V—— I am on my way there now It's strange you should just have arrived to day as I was crossing the river "

I murmured something about tea and fled into the men's hut, where Arten was boiling the kettle

Arten," I stammered out in broken Turkish, the English Pasha will have tea with us You must bring the cups clean The English never have dirty cups'

Arten smiled back very genially, he breathed into a cup and wiped it vigorously with one of his dirty cloths by which I concluded that he understood what I had said to him I had learnt up all the words about dirt and the desirability of washing

It was raining slightly, and we had to ask the Young Man under cover A and I sat down on one of the camp beds, and the Young Man sat on the opposite bed sticking his long legs out through the door

You speak Turkish, then?' he said to me as I returned

So he had heard my injunctions! I hastily denied any claim to a knowledge of the language

Arten came in with the tea, which he placed on the floor between the Young Man's top boots

"The Pasha," he said, addressing X, "said you wanted something for tea which the English always have, only I did not understand what it was "

"Oh," said X, turning to me, "what was it ? "

I kicked X

"Biscuits," I said

"No," said Arten persistently, "it wasn't biscuits, it was something which you don't usually have "

I gave Arten the look which he had learnt to associate with the advisability of his own retreat. The Young Man smiled again and looked the other way

"Yes," he said. "I don't know where we should be very often without biscuits in this country, they are so easy to carry "

I knew then that he had heard

The Young Man stayed about half an hour and then rose to go. His camp had gone on and it was a two hours' ride to the place where they would spend the night

When he had departed X and I thought it over

"You bet," I said fretfully, "he will have a

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five course dinner to-night, on a table with clean plates and knives for each course, and probably a camp chair to sit on."

"Yes," said X, "and n looking glass hung on the wall of his tent, ond hot water and a clean towel."

And that's what n man calls roughing it !

CHAPTER XV.

FLOATING ONWARD.

WE left Jezireh early next morning. The scenery was now much tamer: the banks of the river were low; stretches of red rocks were interspersed with grassy slopes. The river was no longer disturbed by rocks and rapids, and our two raftsmen had been replaced by a bright-faced youth who was going to take us single-handed as far as Mosul.

"Am not I a good raftsman?" he kept on saying to us; "see how quickly I make the raft go. When you get to Mosul you will remember what a good raftsman I was." And standing up on the raft, grasping the two oars, he would throw himself right backwards, causing the raft to shoot through the sluggish stream. Then when we had got into a faster current he would lean on his oars and roll up a cigarette, talking all the time.

"The ladies like me, do they not? They see

I am a good raftsman They surely like me better than their other raftsmen ? ”

Six rafts laden with merchandise had followed us from Jezirch, and one with a hut similar to ours, flying the Turkish crescent, was conveying a Turkish family to Mosul. The women were shut inside the hut the whole time, and occasionally when the rafts drifted alongside, we caught glimpses of them peering slyly at us through the little glazed window. Did they envy us, sitting boldly outside, unveiled, open to the stares of all this crowd ? Or, knowing no other lot, did they merely regard us with astonished curiosity, these women from a strange land, who dressed like women but went about like men ?

The fat little officer in his smart uniform sat outside most of the day, smoking, or playing with his little fat boy, a miniature counterpart of himself, dressed in uniform with a toy sword.

On some of the merchandise rafts the raftsmen were accompanied by their families. The sacks were piled up to form a rough shelter, under which the women and children crouched all day and cooked their masters' food. More rafts joined on to us farther down, until we numbered thirteen. All day we floated in and out amongst each other, the rafts twisting and turning with the changes of the current. The raftsmen yelled

and shouted at one another; they raced for the fast bits of current ahead where only one raft could pass at a time; they jostled one another or got entangled in shallow places, and the other rafts passed them with jeers.

Our little raftsman put forth all his skill.

"See, Pasba," he would say excitedly, "see how we leave them behind! You have the best raftsman; do you see I always have the best of the river? Yah, yah, yah," and he roared derisive laughter at his pursuers.

At night we all moored together, and the raftsmen landed and slept in the caves under overhanging rocks, or lit a fire on the banks and stretched themselves out round it, taking turns at the night watch.

No sooner was the raft drawn up along the banks than X and I landed to get as much exercise as possible in the remaining hour of daylight. The Zaptiehs, who were obliged to accompany us, wrung their hands over this display of energy.

"Amān, amān. These English have strange habits. They land all in a minute, and before you know what they are doing one has rushed in one direction and one in another, and perhaps both are lost in the darkness, and we have orders from the Government never to lose sight of them.

If the Government only knew what they were a king !

We were already afloat when I woke next morning. From my bed I could see the banks shooting past the little window of the hut. The reader must not imagine a continuous view, such as one would get through the window of a steamer. The banks at one moment would move straight past the window in the orthodox way, then they would be suddenly shooting past in the opposite direction, or we had a view of the river behind. It requires in many ways a certain amount of practice to live in a state of equilibrium on a raft. One is constantly being made aware that there are two sides to every thing. First of all there are, as one would expect, two sides to the river, and owing to the particular method of our progression we were always being reminded, in a most irritating way, of this fact. No sooner had we noticed the scenery on one side, and had decided that it was the right bank, than—swish—round went the raft, and the whole length of the right bank would be shot before our view like a circular panorama, and before you could take it in you were looking at the left bank, moreover you would be looking at it moving past you upwards, though you were perfectly certain the raft could only be floating

downwards. There was hardly time to reason this out when—swish—round you go the reverse way again, the left bank swings past you downwards and you are travelling up the right bank, although the raft, you are persuaded, is still pursuing its downward course. If you stood outside and kept your eye on some fixed spot, you might be able to keep your bearings with a strong mental effort. But when you observed the features of the landscape through the small window of your hut you gave it up—and simply gazed at the view as you would at a magic-lantern slide being slowly withdrawn through the porthole of a steamer.

“How delightful this is,” I said, “to be able to lose all conception of time and float on, as it were, to eternity!”

“Personally,” said X, “I find myself counting the days with a most unpleasant perception of the lapse of time, for we have only food enough for one day, and there is no possibility of renewing our supply for two.”

I felt an injury had been inflicted on me by being reminded of absence of dinner when I had been absorbed in great thoughts. But I had not long to wait for my revenge.

“What a picturesque man the raftsman is!” X exclaimed suddenly. “I take such a delight

in watching him shaking out his flowing garments and folding himself up in such graceful attitudes."

Personally," I said, with some malice, "it gives me no pleasure since I became aware that he is only engaged in hunting for fleas."

X made no answer; I felt we were quits. She would have to think of the presence of fleas while I thought of the absence of dinner.

We floated on very quietly that day. The banks were flatter and the patches of grass became more frequent. At long intervals we passed villages of mud huts built on the sides of the river where the banks rose to a higher point. Towards evening we swung round under a rocky prominence, on the top of which stood the village of Hassom. There was no possibility of mooring the raft anywhere near it for the night. The banks rose up in a straight wall of rock, of such a height that the inhabitants of the village, peering down at us from above, seemed like pigmies on the sky-line. We floated on until the hulls curved and the banks sloped down to a muddy flat. The other rafts were already moored along the shore, and we drifted alongside of them. Ali and I landed, and we set off to walk back to the village in the hope of getting some eggs and milk to eke out our supply of provisions. We had some difficulty in scrambling up the wet,

grassy places between edges of rock where the water oozed out and trickled down to the river below, and on reaching the top we found ourselves on the edge of a tableland which ended abruptly in the cliff under which we had floated. Below us we could see the river winding ahead through a low-lying country to the east. We walked for half a mile across the flat table top towards the village; a long procession of black and yellow cattle was sauntering along in front of us, lowing quietly in answer to the shrill calls of a boy who stood motionless on a little hillock, a weird figure in the straight, square-cut sheep-skin cloak of the natives.

From all sides flocks of goats and sheep were coming in and filled the narrow streets, sharing the homes of their masters as a protection against the raids of Kurds. The inhabitants mingled their curiosity at my appearance with fright at that of Ali's. Long experience had taught them that a visit from a Turkish Zaptieh meant extortion of some sort. A child in our path screamed aloud, rooted to the spot with terror. Ali's bright, laughing face clouded over.

"That is what the children are taught to think of us," he said, "and I have my own little ones at home."

Our demands for milk were received with

sullen grimness, until the sight of the unwonted coin caused the faces to clear, and a further present of tobacco established quite a friendly footing. I sat down inside an enclosure of maize stalks at the door of a hut, where the cows were being milked, and the natives, clustering round, plied Ah with questions. One of the villagers offered to walk back with us and carry the milk. It was dark before we reached the edge of the tableland again, and I shouted down in hopes of getting an answer which would guide us to the encampment below. The village boy held up his hand with a scared look. The call was only answered by its own echo, and the stones, slipping under our feet, rattled noisily down the steep slope.

"Hush!" said Ah, "who knows but what the Kurds may hear you." And we slid silently down the slippery banks in the darkness, until the light of a camp fire gleamed out a welcome signal.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE EVIL ONE.

AT noon on the fourth day after leaving Jezireh we caught sight of the minarets and cupolas of Mosul, and floated for a couple of miles under the chain of limestone cliffs on the end of which the town is built. We had hardly got within sight of the town itself when a fearful booming met our ears, accompanied by piercing screams and savage yells. It sounded as if the walls were being attacked by battering rams, and all along the shore at their base we could faintly distinguish a seething line of human beings brandishing some form of weapon. We thought that we were going to be eye-witnesses of a tribal disturbance. I determined to make full use of the opportunity, and prepared my camera and notebook.

The Zaptiehs, however, seemed quite unconcerned, and we understood from them that there was no cause for alarm, and that this sort of thing was of weekly occurrence in Mosul. On

floating up to the scene of action we realised that it was indeed only Mosul's washing day. All along the shore, as far as we could see, under the walls of the town stretched a continuous line of women beating clothes with flat sticks on the stones at the water's edge, and the screams resolved themselves into the ordinary sounds usually emitted where women congregate in large numbers. The men of the East had thus solved the problem of washing day and all its horrors, and were left in peaceful and undisputed possession of their hearths and tempers. The women were there in their hundreds, and as we approached the bridge of boats which crossed the river lower down, we floated past a small army of them on the opposite shore, where a flat stretch of mud was covered with gaudy rags laid out to dry. Mosul, I believe, derives its name from the manufacture of muslin carried on there, and the guide-book informs us that it is chiefly remarkable for the Assyrian mounds found near it. I am bound to confess, however, that it is indubitably impressed on my mind solely in its connection with the art of washing.

We had to wait several days at Mosul while a new raft was being constructed, to which our huts were bodily transferred. The skins on which we had floated so far were deflated, and

the raftsmen returned with them to Diarbekr by land on donkey back.

We spent the time visiting the historic mound of Koyunjik, which is the site of Nineveh. It rises out of the flat cauntry on the opposite side of the river to Mosul ; it is surrounded by smaller tumuli representing parts of the ancient walls. Here and there are patches of cultivation, and at the time of our visit the bare brown earth was beginning to show promise of being covered by a scanty vegetation. Of winged bulls, of lettered slabs, of cylinders, of all the wondrous contents of the palaces of the ancient Assyrian kings, some of which can be seen in the British Museum, the only indications we had on the spot were the tunnels, now choked with fallen débris, from which they had been removed ; and the broken bits of masonry and pottery which were strewn about the surface. From the summit we obtained a comprehensive view of the country : of Mosul at our feet standing on its limestone cliffs at the farther side of the Tigris, and of the distant country through which the river wandered southwards—a great plain dotted with villages, round which patches of cultivated land were already green with the rising corn. Long strings of mules laden with cabbages and other vegetables came in from the outlying villages and swelled

was divided by islands with low, swampy banks, round which the waters lost themselves in marshy tracts, where herons waded in and out and innumerable black ducks dived and spluttered amongst the rushes. The jungle round was the haunt of the wild boar, jackal, and hyena. It was hard to believe that a few weeks later the first spring sun would call forth wild masses of gorgeous flowers and long, rank grasses, and that the whole country would be teeming with vegetation.

It was, indeed, a monotonous bit of country. The sun had not yet melted the snows of the distant Armenian hills, which later on would cause a rapid flood in the river, and we progressed very slowly in the sluggish waters. Our two raftsmen displayed no desire to hurry, and leant on their oars all day, disturbing the general harmony by constant quarrelling in harsh, grating voices. Now and then Ali, who was fat and meek, would address himself to them in a soothing almost pleading tone of voice. The purport of their remarks was lost to us, as their conversation was carried on in Arabic, and we found it hard to extract any information out of Ali, who could communicate with us only in Turkish.

"Tell them they must stop talking and row," I said, "we are hardly moving at all."

And Ah would answer,—

“They will row, Effendi, indeed they will row.” And the raftsmen rested on their oars as before, and the Evil One would smile at me, distorting his ugly countenance with a horrible grin.

Finally, Ah informed us that they had brought no food with them and that they were hungry. If the Pashas would give them bread they could row, now they were faint. This was a favourite Eastern dodge with which we were well acquainted by this time. The raftsmen were always engaged on the understanding that they fed themselves, and knowing the fatal results of giving in on such points we hardened our countenances.

“Tell them we cannot help that, they knew they had to bring their own food, and if they starve it is not our fault.” And the Evil One, on hearing this, gave us another grin, even more horrible than before.

When we retired into the hut for our next meal I took the precaution of cutting a hole in the felt wall, and peeping through it I saw them comfortably ensconced at the farthest end of the raft, eating bread and scraps of meat out of a dirty linen bag, on which they hastily sat when we reappeared.

Arten was terribly afraid of them, and I knew what that meant!

"Arten," I said, "if you dare to give these men any food without my leave we will land you at the next village."

Arten hastily disclaimed any intention of giving them food, but he evidently cherished



THE MAKING OF A RAFT.

the thought as quite a good idea, for he was more frightened of them than he was of me.

Early on the second day we arrived at a small village, where it seemed as if we were expected. There was a crowd on the banks, and one of the men was waiting with a large sack. Ali explained to us that it contained the raftsmen's bread, and that we must land to take it on board.

The Evil One waded on shore with the rope, which he made fast to a rock. A little farther down the banks were several natives making a raft, and I strolled down to have a look at them. One man sat on the ground with a pile of skins beside him. The skins had been cut off above the hind legs, and the man was engaged in tying up this end, and the openings of the fore legs, with string. One end of the string was tied round his big toe, and he worked the other end round the gathered end of the skin until the tied ends were quite air-tight. Then he threw the skin to another man, who blew into the open fore end until it was inflated, when he tied it up. A third man stood in the water, tying the inflated skins on to the poplar poles, with the ends of the same strings that had served to tie up the openings.

After watching them a little time I returned to our raft. By this time the whole village had turned out, and a great uproar was going on.

"What's up?" I said to X, who had not left the raft.

"I've been trying to find out," said X. "The Evil One has displeased them somehow, and they will not let him go."

We instructed Ali to insist on our going on. The second raftsman, Jedan by name, seemed

only too delighted; he kept winking at us and pointing derisively at the Evil One. He untied the rope and shoved off. A man on the shore promptly seized the rope and held us back.

"Get a stick," said X, "and give him a smack on his head."

X was of a peaceable disposition, and I dare say she was laughing at me. She enjoyed seeing me get angry. But it was in our contract that I should do all the manual labour connected with keeping order, so I obediently seized a long pole and let it descend gently on the offender's shoulder. He turned round and stared, dropping the rope with an astonished grin. The crowd burst into joyous shouts and pointed at the Evil One, who still stood talking angrily in their midst.

"Hit him!" they yelled; "he is the one to hit!" And quite believing them, I transferred my attentions, along with the end of the pole, to his shoulder.

"Come!" I shouted. It sounds tame, but it was the only Arabic word I knew. The raft slowly drifted downstream, and the Evil One, dashing in up to his waist, clambered on board.

Ali explained to us that he refused to pay enough for his bread, and that the crowd would not let him go until he had done so.

The Evil One grinned, and, diving into the bag offered me a dirty piece of native bread in his still dirtier fingers. He would share his food with us, though we refused to do so with him, a typical Eastern method of putting one in the wrong.

The waters were still sluggish, and the men seemed determined to do no work.

I am beginning to think they are in league with some one on shore," said X. "It cannot be to their advantage to be so long on the way, as they are paid a lump sum to get us to Baghdad, and we are not feeding them. I quite expect we shall be held up and robbed before evening."

Finding that orders and threats were of no use, and learning from Ali that Jedan, the second craftsman, was afraid of the Evil One, who would not allow him to row, I sat down facing them and produced my revolver.

"Tell the head craftsman," I said to Ali, "that if he does not row I will shoot him."

The Evil One, greatly to my astonishment, appeared to believe him, and set to work at the oars. All the rest of the day I sat with my revolver pointed at his head. It was a most fatiguing process.

"Supposing he does stop rowing," said X, "will you shoot him?"

"I cannot think what I shall do," I said, "the only way will be to fire over his head and pretend I've missed him"

"Mind you do miss him," said X

"Sure to," I answered hopefully

Some hours before sunset we were held up in a manner which admitted of no blame being attached to the Evil One. A strong head wind arose, before which the raft refused to make headway, and we were forced to take refuge on a dreary mud bank which sloped down to the water's edge under a low line of rocks

The men sat about cross and disconsolate. It was very unsafe, they said, to spend the night so far from a village. We should certainly be attacked. We might be there for days, and what should we do for food? Tired of looking at their sulky faces, I clambered up the cliff above to see what I could see. The top of the hill was as level as if it had been flattened out by a giant with a hot iron. A low line of hills with equally flattened tops at a little distance hid the farther view. I walked to the top of them, led on by the sort of fascination which makes one wish to see what is hidden between one and the horizon. Having reached the top there was nothing to be seen but repeated lines of naked, flat topped hills. With an effort I

turned to retrace my steps, when my eye caught sight of a dark object on the line of hills on which I stood which made my blood turn cold. A wild looking, half naked Arab, who seemed to have dropped suddenly from the sky, was standing motionless gazing at me from a little distance. For one moment I stood transfixed with nameless dread. What hordes of like beings might not be concealed behind these mysterious hillocks? He moved one step towards me, and I turned and fled, down the slope and across the level plain to the edge of the cliff under which the raft was moored. The apparition pursued me silently. On reaching the edge of the cliff I peered over, and could see the crew of the raft still occupying the positions in which I had left them. My senses now slowly returned, and I sat down to await the arrival of the apparition out of consideration to my own self respect. He was still some distance from me, and on seeing me sit down he also sat down, and we gazed at one another. The comic element in the scene asserted itself a savage and I holding each other at bay like two dogs preparing for a fight on the top of the cliff, and down below X sitting unconcernedly on the raft. I laughed out loud, the savage sprang to his feet with a yell, brandished his arms in the air, and darting up a

neighbouring slope, disappeared behind it as suddenly as he had appeared.

I slid down the cliff and joined X.

"Where have you been?" she said. "I was just going to send Ali to look for you; he says it is not safe to go out of sight of the raft."

"I was only on the top," I answered, too ashamed to enter into further details.

We discussed our general situation in bed that night.

"X," I said, "if you met a savage all alone in a wild piece of country what would you do?"

"Why, go up and speak to him, of course," said X; "it would be awfully interesting. What would you do?"

"I don't know," I answered; "I want to go to sleep now."

The wind dropped in the night, and at the first break of day we were off once more.

CHAPTER XVII

ARAB HOSPITALITY

FIFTY THREE pairs of dark eyes were fixed upon us in unwavering scrutiny, it was dark and there was silence. The eyes, as they gleamed out of the darkness, might have belonged to a herd of wild beasts watching their prey, but we were privileged guests of the Arab Sheikh in whose tent we were sitting, and the gaze was that of friendly curiosity. We had been placed on the seat of honour, a rush mat at one side of the tent. Opposite to us squatted our host a venerable old man with a white beard which flowed over his bare, wrinkled chest, with one arm he supported a small boy, who played with the beads round the old chief's neck.

Between us, in the centre of the hut, glowed a dying fire, and beside it, silently watching the pot on the ashes, sat the coffee maker. Now and then he scraped the ashes together round the pot. A thin veil of smoke rose up slowly and dispersed itself under the low roof of the

tent The silence was almost religious, the darkness suggested witchcraft rather than night, a hobgoblin might have sprung out of the coffee maker's pot and not been out of keeping with the natural sequence of events

All at once, at the back of the tent, a hand was raised and a bundle of brushwood came down on the fire, in sudden blazo it lit up the fifty three dark faces, flared an instant, flared, then as rapidly died away We silently watched the coffee maker and our host, who, being nearest to the fire, were dimly visible in its dim light The attention of the one was concentrated on his pot, that of the other in common with his companions, on us

The Sheikh had stood up to welcome us on our arrival, unexpected and uninvited in the midst of his tribe We had been guided to his tent by the long spear which stood upright at the door, and when he had offered us that token of Arab good will the cup of coffee, we knew that we were amongst friends He waved us to our seats, and then, seating himself, pulled the child towards him, he patted his own chest, and then pointed to the lad with pride

"His youngest child," interpreted Ali, who understood a few words of Arabic

We nodded, and these acts of courtesy having

established the requisite good feeling, all need for further converse seemed at an end, and a comfortable silence fell upon us all.

The whole village had followed us to their chief's tent as a matter of course, and those for whom there was no room inside herded together at the door. The Eastern standard of ideas, which allows respectful equality with one's superiors, accounted for the absence of all mannered jostling which would have taken place in a civilised crowd under similar circumstances.

The coffee-maker reached out his hand without turning and one amongst the crowd at his back handed him a massive iron spoon to which was chained a copper ladle. The Sheikh's little son, obeying a nod from his father, pulled a bag out of a dark recess behind him, another bundle of brushwood was thrown upon the fire, and by the light of its sudden, almost startling blaze, the lad untied the bag and carefully counted out the allotted number of coffee-berries. The coffee-maker dropped them into the spoon, for which he had raked out a hole in the ashes. The slight stir caused by these proceedings subsided, the blaze died away, and the attention of all was again riveted on us, save that only of the coffee-maker, who, sitting close up to the embers, now

scraped the white ashes round the pot, now turned the roasting berries over with the ladle chained to the spoon. The Sheikh's hand stole out to the little boy's head, and the boy, looking up, stroked the old man's beard.

Meanwhile the berries had blackened, and the man emptied them into a copper mortar. As he pounded them he caused the pestle to ring in tune against the sides of the bowl. The child laughed gleefully and pointed at him, the stern old man smiled and shot a proud glance at us.

Not a soul moved. Outside in the dusk a stunted black cow thoughtfully chewed the maize stalks of which the enclosure round the tent was built, and a kid rubbed his head up and down against a child's bare leg. Beyond this the darkness had nothing to conceal. We were in the middle of a bare, largely uninhabited desert land known only to a few wandering Arab tribes. Outside, the mysterious open vault of the dark sky, with its many hundred points of light, inside, the mysterious recess of the dark tent, with the fifty three pairs of gleaming eyes, every one fixed upon ourselves. Now and then, as a flash of lightning in the sky at night will expose the immediate surroundings to view, so a sudden spark from the fire revealed the setting of the eyes—the solemn, dusky Arab faces.

There was a splutter on the fire as the pot boiled over. The man transferred the ground coffee to a copper jug and, pouring the boiling water on to them, placed this second pot on the hot ashes. We had been sitting there for an hour watching these preparations, and it seemed as if we might now reasonably hope to taste the results. Our expectations were enhanced by the appearance of three tiny cups which had been unearthed from a dark corner and handed to one of the men nearest the fire. He proceeded to rinse them out with hot water, displaying a care in the process which contrasted strangely with the simplicity of his task. The coffee on the fire came to the boil, the coffee maker poured it back into the original pot, which he again set on the ashes. He then handed the empty jug to the cup washer, who rinsed each cup out carefully with a few drops of the coffee left for this purpose. Very quietly, very precisely, he placed each cup on the ground within reach of the coffee-maker, and retreated into the background.

The coffee on the fire boiled up, we straightened ourselves in expectation as the coffee-maker reached out his hand. But he emptied the boiling liquid back again into the original pot and replaced it on the ashes.

The fire now burned very dimly. Even the

man's form bending over the glowing ashes was discernible only as a black shadow. The stillness for a few moments was so great, and the concentration of all so centred on the bubbling coffee-pot, that one felt as if all the meaning of life—the past, the present, and the future—was being distilled in the black liquid, and that an incantation was only necessary for the future to take shape and, rising out of the pot, become visible to us all in this mysterious darkness.

The stillness became more intense. Outside, a lamb's sudden cry and the mother's answering bleat rang out sharply in the black night—a distant reminder of a far-off world; it died away, and the broken silence was all the more intense.

The coffee boiled up.

By this time we had ceased to associate the drinking of coffee with the end of these mysterious rites. The coffee of Cook's hotels, the coffee of crowded railway stations, whole coffee, ground coffee, French coffee, coffee at 1s. 8d. a pound; the clatter of black saucepans, the hot and anxious cook, the bustling waiter, the impatient people of the world with only a minute to wait—calling for instantaneous coffee; what had coffee and all these associations to do with this? And so it was with a certain shock that we looked at this magician pouring the result of his black art into

the cups a few carefully measured drops only. Two were handed to us and one to the Sheikh. We sipped the only black drink slowly and thoughtfully. A liquid which had been prepared with so much deliberation could not be quaffed down with reckless indifference. It was thick and bitter. We drained the last drop and returned the cups. Another spoonful was poured in, and they were passed back to us. Etiquette required that we should not refuse till the third time of offering, then the remainder of the coffee was handed round to the rest of the company in order of rank.

There was a stir amongst the crowd round the door, and a woman forced her way through with a baby in her arms. She squatted in front of us, and held the child up for our closer inspection by the firelight.

"Ill," said Ali, "she wants medicine."

The mother pointed to the sores on the child's face and body, the pleading eloquence in her dark eyes rendering unnecessary any explanations on the part of our interpreter.

The baby, though only a few months old, had been pierced in the nose and ears for the reception of the ornaments which were to enhance its charms in after life, and of the blue bead which would ensure its safety from the one recognised

enemy, the Evil Eye. The wounds were healing badly, and the irritation set up had caused fever.

"Tell her we can give her medicine," we said to Ali. "But it is not medicine to drink; it is to wash the wounds with. If the baby drinks it, it will die."

The message was interpreted. "Aha, aha, Mashallah," was murmured all through the crowd. The baby became an object of intense interest. Ali threw back his head and pretended to swallow; then he pointed significantly to heaven and to the unconscious victim at his feet.

"Ha! ha!" murmured the crowd.

Hassan meanwhile had begun to fidget uneasily.

"There are fleas here," he said; "you must not stop any longer."

We rose, and silently salaaming our host, passed out of the tent. It was lighter outside: the moon had risen, casting mysterious black shadows round the huts, where weird black and white forms flitted stealthily in and out.

Owing to the shallowness of the water on the low shelving mud banks we had been unable to bring the raft right up to the shore, and it had been moored at a little distance out in the water. The raftsmen had carried us across on their backs, and had returned to cook their evening

meal on board. We now shouted across the water to them to come and carry us back. As we stood waiting, a woman came up to us dragging a child by the arm, who hid his head in his mother's dress and refused to allow himself to be examined.

"He is ill too," said Ali, "like the other child."

"We will give them some medicine when we get on the raft," we said; "tell them each to send a cup."

"And this one says he is ill," the man went on, as a tall, sheepish-looking youth touched me on the arm; "they will all say they are ill now that they know you have medicine."

"We can only give to those who are really ill," we answered; "what is the matter with this one?"

"He has fever: he cannot eat, and his head hurts."

I had some quinine pills in my pocket, and I gave three to the boy.

"Tell him to take two now, and not to keep them in his mouth," I explained, "but drink some water and swallow them down; then, when the sun has risen one hour to-morrow, let him take the other one."

A dozen interested spectators at once went through the whole process in pantomime: an

imaginary pill was swallowed, and its downward course indicated by stroking the chest. "Ha!" was ejaculated all round. Then the second pill was swallowed, with equally suggestive signs. The rising point of the sun was indicated, and one finger held up, and the third pill swallowed.

"Mashallah!" cried the crowd, staring with bated breath.

We boarded the raft, and had scarcely established ourselves in our sleeping hut when Hassan staggered to the door with a huge clay pitcher capable of holding several gallons; he deposited it at our feet.

"For the medicine," he said gravely.

"We said that the woman was to send a cup," we said; "the few drops of lotion will be lost in that."

"For the medicine," he answered imperturbably.

"We had better send it in one of our cups," I said, and I measured out some lotion. Hassan took it; a few minutes later he returned laden with cups, jars, pitchers, and howls of every size and description.

"For the medicine," he said, as he deposited them beside us.

We looked at one another aghast.

"Say that we have no more," we said.

‘I have told them,’ he said, ‘but they will not go away.’

We went outside where a tremendous hubbub had arisen. Our men were standing round the edge of the raft resolutely pushing would be intruders back into the river. Up to their waists in water, hanging on to the raft at every point, shouting out their ailments, pointing to their throats their eyes their heads, were the whole male population of the place. In vain our men strove to keep them off, the raft was besieged at every point. In desperation we unmoored and floated out into the middle of the river, the most determined swam out after us, and, holding on to the raft with one hand, stroked their chests. Finally, as we drifted downstream, they gave up and the last sight we had was that of a line of disconsolate invalids, suddenly endowed with great evidences of health and strength, careering wildly on the mud flats in the starlight round a discarded heap of empty bowls and pitchers.

CHAPTER XVIII.

A STORM AND A LULL.

THE raftsmen were still very quarrelsome; the whole day their grating voices never stopped. They seemed, however, quite anxious to row now, and proposed at sunset that we should not moor to the shore as usual, but, as the night was not very dark, keep on and make up for lost time. We had been in bed a little while, and were dropping off to sleep in spite of the ceaseless quarrelsome voices, when a worse outbreak than usual thoroughly awakened me.

"They are having a fight on board," said X sleepily; "I suppose we must leave them at it."

I peered through the chinks of the door. Jedan had taken off all his clothes, and was trying to jump off the raft into the middle of the river. Hassan and Ali were holding on to him for dear life, and the Evil One sat at the oars screaming with rage. Arten was offering him the remains of our dinner. Jedan seemed finally to yield to the other men's entreaties, and sat down on

the raft, the tears rolling down his cheeks. Ali sat beside him holding his hand and murmuring soothing words. The Evil One occupied himself with devouring the dinner. Peace seemed, in fact, restored, and our slumbers were not again disturbed.

Next morning we threatened them both with dismissal at Tekreet where we hoped to arrive that day, which we knew was the seat of a governor, to whom we could make a show of appealing if the worst came to the worst. The cause of the disturbance was put down to Jedan, whose native village was close by. He had threatened to leave the raft altogether if the Evil One bullied him any longer. Jedan begged to be allowed to visit his home, and it so happened that the wind rose again to such a pitch just opposite the place that we were compelled to put to shore. It was another Arab encampment, a collection of black tents with maize enclosures. Jedan at once disappeared amongst them, and later on as we strolled round the village, we came across him, seated just inside a tent with two small children on his knees. He invited us to come in and sit down. The tent was full of his kindred. In the far corner a child shared with a bleating kid the quilted covering which was the bed of the family. A woman beside him

was spinning wool, and another at the door was grinding corn. A grown-up son sat opposite, industriously working the wool from his mother's wheel on a leather sole for sandals.

Jedan appeared in quite a new light in the centre of his family circle; he suddenly seemed endowed with a dignity suited to his present position as monarch of all he surveyed. The children on his knee clung to him and stroked his head, and he softly patted theirs. All the gruff surliness and cringing hatred of the expression with which he regarded the Evil One on the raft had disappeared, and he smiled contentedly on his domestic surroundings. He sent the boy out into the village with orders to get some delicacy in our honour. In a few minutes the lad returned with a raw turnip, which was cut into chunks and offered to us with much ceremony. Then a bowl of milk was produced, and we felt compelled to drink out of the common stock.

At midday the wind had subsided, and we insisted on starting off at once, with the hope of reaching Tekreet before evening. It was five days since we had left Mosul, and we had scarcely covered one hundred miles. As we had counted on reaching Baghdad in that time, our supply of provisions had got very low. The river was

DEAD YOUNG OF WATER."



now deep and broad, and the strong current carried us along at a good pace. Jedan's visit to his family had put him in a very good humour, and even the Evil One, who had shared in the feast of raw turnip, worked quietly at the oars. Every moment took us farther from the snow mountains and the bleak country of the north and nearer the sunny south. Already the sun's rays poured down soothingly, and everybody was in a state of quiet contentment. Hassan, seated cross-legged with his back against the hut, dozed at intervals. Abi was rolling up long, fat cigarettes by the door, and Arten, stretched full length inside, was making up for his disturbed slumbers of the past night. X lay on a rug at the edge of the raft, and I sat beside her reading aloud the Prophetic utterances on Nineveh. The Bible is one of the few books that one can read in this sort of wandering life. This is, perhaps, because we are in the land where people live in rock houses, and hew their tombs in rocks, and wear girdles, and say "Aha," eat much honey, go out to desolate lands, and say their prayers on the housetop. We were living with the shepherds who divided the sheep and goats at nightfall and watered their flocks at sundown, with the women who came down with their pitchers to the wells, and with the elders sitting at the gates.

A sudden chill crept into the atmosphere, and a blackness covered the face of the waters. I looked up at the sky. A line of angry, black clouds had overtaken the sun, gathering up the scattered white fleeces in its path, and was advancing rapidly over our heads. An ominous sound of rising winds seemed to herald its approach. In less than three minutes we were swept up in the arms of a howling gale; sudden gusts caught the walls of the hut and swirled us round, the playthings of a merciless, raging force—at one moment bearing us into the middle of the stream, and the next dashing us against its rocky sides. The rain came down in blinding torrents, and the waves, breaking over the raft, made it seem as if we were being submerged. Then we rose once more on the crest of a wave, which dashed us against a wall of rock with a force which seemed as if it must shatter asunder all the creaking poles of the raft. Ali and Hassan stood on the edge, trying to break the force of the blows with the butt end of their spears, while the raftsmen struggled fruitlessly at the oars. The lowering black sky, the raging waters, the unyielding black walls of rock, the setting of darkness to this struggle, seemed to be no less than a fight with death. The birds clung buddled up with fright

on the far corner of the raft and went through the mudday prayer, this over he borrowed a needle and thread from me and began darning a tear in his ragged uniform

The sun shone brightly and our clothes were soon dry. Birds appeared on the bank, shaking their feathers and stretching out one limb after another. The lull that follows a great storm reigned over everything, all nature seemed resting after her exertions. Ali finished his darning and began to sing. The raftsmen joined in the chorus clapping their hands. An element of cheerful carelessness established itself on board. I went inside and began to invent a pudding for dinner. Arten was not enlightened in his profession as cook, and I was trying to supplement his deficiencies by the light of nature, for Arten did not seem to have that sort of light. I tied the mixture up in a handkerchief and set it to boil in a pot on the brazier. One by one the men came in and sat round the fire, gazing silently at the pot while they smoked. After a time I took the bd off and examined its contents.

"Is it really going to be a pudding?" said X, with an agonized expression.

I tried to recall what puddings looked like in England, and then remembered that I had never seen one at this stage.

"I cannot say till it is finished," I said.

The pudding still clung ominously to the handkerchief. I had greased it well, and have since heard that you only grease pans. I gave it a few minutes longer; then, as we were all hungry, I fished it out of the pot and untied the handkerchief.

"Bak!" (Look) said Arten.

"Bak!" said Hassan.

"Bak!" said Ali.

"Bak!" said the raftsmen.

It was a moment of extreme tension.

I slipped it on to a plate.

"Now look," said Arten.

"See now what a cook she is!" said Hassan;

"a wonderful cook."

"Mashallah," said Ali.

"Mashallah," said the raftsmen.

"It is a pudding," said X, "a real pudding."

We all gazed at it for several moments in great excitement. I handed X a spoon, and we each took a mouthful; then we looked at one another.

"It is a pudding," said X again.

It almost seemed as if she were trying to persuade herself of the fact against the dictates of reason. When we had finished, the men shared our spoons in turn; each one cautiously

raised a spoonful and smelt it, then they swallowed it, very much as one remembers swallowing jam in the nursery when one knew there was a powder inside

"Good," they said, very deliberately, nodding their heads, and then, as they handed the spoon to their neighbour, "English" they added. One felt that the first word was Turkish politeness, the second was a veiled warning to their brethren

But on the whole it seemed a success; we had a sense of repletion, how often had we not swallowed howfuls of rice and been only conscious of a great internal void

We arrived at Tekreet just before sunset, and we at once sent Ali up to the Governor with the request that he would help us in the dismissal of the Evil One

"Tell the Governor," we said, "that we can not sleep for the noise he makes at night, and our heads ache from the noise he makes in the day time, and that he has guided the raft so badly that we have spent five days getting here from Mosul"

Ali obediently disappeared. He first communicated the substance of our remarks to the raftsmen, who, after putting their heads together, landed and strolled down a rambling street of

Arah huts. We also went on shore with Hassan, and wandered about along the rocky paths amongst the tombs which ran down to the water's edge. Tekreet boasts of one palm tree, the first we had seen on the river, and an old castle, the ruins of which stand on a rock above. The town is a tumble-down sort of place, inhabited chiefly by Arabs, who ply rafts with merchandise between Mosul and Baghdad. Ali returned with the news that the Governor had given orders for new raftsmen to be ready in the morning. He apologized in the name of the Sultan for the discomfort we had experienced in his Highness's domains. We asked what had become of the others, and were informed that they were frightened of being punished and had run away.

"That's curious," I said. "I should have thought that no Eastern would put fright before baksheesh, or mind what a Governor said in this district."

Later on an emissary arrived from the Governor with a piece of sheep, and a message that he would travel with us the next day as far as Samarah. Accordingly we sent back word that we were starting at sunrise.

CHAPTER XIX

AN ENCOUNTER WITH FANATICS

IT was long after sunrise when we awoke next morning, the raft was still tied up, and the men showed no signs of moving

Hi ! ' shouted A to Hassan through the felt wall " Why haven't we started ? "

The Governor has not arrived yet, Effendi "

We waited another ten minutes

' Hi ! Hassan, has the Governor come ? "

' No Effendi, he will come soon "

We turned over and had another doze

' Hi ! Hassan, if the Governor has not come we shall go without him Send Ali to say that we must start now "

Yes, Effendi, he will go "

Turkish acquiescence, especially when very polite, is suspicious I got out of bed and peeped through the door. Ali was sitting on the bank chatting with a local Zaptieh

Hi ! Hassan, send Ali at once "

Yes yes, Effendi, this minute he goes "

From my point of observation I reported that neither Hassan nor Ali was making any move in the matter, so we decided to dress and become strenuous about it.

I relieved my feelings at intervals by trying to express in my best Turkish to Hassan, through the wall, what I thought of the Governor who dared to keep great English Pashas waiting beyond the accustomed two hours which one concedes to Eastern ideas of punctuality.

Before we had finished dressing a sudden rocking of the raft and general bustle outside announced our departure. Through the window I took a last look at Tekreet and thanked my lucky stars that departure from it meant also deliverance from the Evil One.

"Do you think the Governor will be angry with us for leaving him behind?" I said.

"Let us hope not," said X, as we emerged from the hut for breakfast, "we owe him something for ridding us of the Evil One."

The words were hardly out of my mouth before we became aware of the Evil One himself, sitting between the oars in his usual place. He greeted us with a bland smile. Beside him, instead of Jedan, sat a grinning boy.

We turned on Ali for an explanation.

"Ach, Effendi, he is good now. He will not

“speak—he will not say a word; he is changed; he is now a good raftsman. The ladies can now sleep at night.”

The Evil One nodded affably at us and put his finger on his sealed lips. The grinning boy understood Turkish. “I am a good raftsman, Effendi; I do not talk—I never say a word.”

We had become sufficiently Oriental to reconcile ourselves to the dictates of Destiny; there was no getting rid of him now, so we had to be content with threats of no baksheesh if a word was uttered on the way to Baghdad.

We caught sight of a stranger in the men’s hut

“Who is that?” I said.

“The Governor, Effendi.”

How long has he been there?”

Since sunrise, Effendi.”

Why did you say he had not come?”

“Ach, Effendi, the raftsmen’s bread was not ready; they could not go without bread.”

So all this time the local magnate had been sitting listening to our abuse of him.

The country below Tekreet began to have a more civilised look: there were plantations of cucumbers and melons on the banks, and roughly constructed windlasses for raising the water by skins into irrigating channels. We passed several

ruined villages, and caught sight in the distance of the remains of an old castle.

At noon, after floating about three or four miles, we arrived within sight of Samarah, a town which was made conspicuous by the huge blue dome of its mosque, and was, we learnt later on, a place of pilgrimage for Mahomedans. We drew up opposite it to land the Governor, and Hassan announced his intention of landing also to replenish the store of charcoal.

"Then I'll get off too," said X. "I want to see inside that mosque."

X had a mania for looking at mosques; we had seen inside hundreds, and she never seemed to get tired of them. I connected the process chiefly with having to unlace your boots—a proceeding I detest—and dawdling over cold floors in your stockings. Then you had to remember to cross your hands in front; if you put them behind your back or in your pockets you were a marked infidel.

The raft was run along the shore, and we walked up to the town. It was enclosed by a high mud wall which was defended by towers and bastions. We entered through a large gateway, and found ourselves amongst a collection of falling mud houses lining the usual dirty, narrow streets. Hassan went in search of char-

coal, and we, accompanied by Ali, strolled on to the mosque. We were followed by the usual crowd of curious minded inhabitants, but being by this time quite used to these attentions, we did not notice them particularly. X was in front, and advanced towards the low line of chains which barred the entrance to the building. She was in the act of stepping over the chains when an excited looking fanatic rushed at her and hurled her across the street with what appeared to be effusive execrations. In one moment we were hemmed in by an angry, buzzing mob, there was no mistaking the glaring menace of their expressions and the significant handling of the long knives worn by all natives in their belts. We realised in a flash that we had unwittingly aroused the dangerous side of Eastern fanaticism. Resistance was out of the question, a sign of fear would have been fatal. We stopped and looked over the crowd. Ali, our only protector, stood beside us white and trembling appealing to some of the leading men, who hesitated and glared at us in wavering suspicion. Hassan was nowhere in sight.

Let's stroll on as far as the end of the street," said X.

Yes' I answered, "that seems a good idea." Don't let's hurry," she said.

"No," I replied; "we have plenty of time."

The crowd made way for us as we turned from the mosque, and we walked on beyond it up through the bazaars. The men had begun to fight and wrangle amongst themselves, the narrow street was tightly packed, and the crowd surged up behind us as we walked on. We were in the covered part of the bazaars; gaudy cotton coats of Eastern make lay on the top of bales of Manchester prints and flannelettes; there was the leather stall, with gorgeous beaded bridles and handsomely embroidered native saddles, and next it was the boot bazaar, a mass of red and yellow sandals. We had seen it all, just the same, in a score of similar villages, but I took it all in this time as I had never taken it in before.

"What a funny baby's garment that is!" said X.

The crowd behind were beginning to push.

"Yes," I said; "I wonder how it gets outside the baby."

An angry buzz arose just behind us; were they going to stick us in the back? We both disdained to turn our heads to see.

"I hope Hassan will think of getting some spinaeh," I said; "there was some in the vegetable bazaar."

"He knows you like it," X answered, "he is sure to get it"

We had come to the end of the row of stalls; we slowly turned and faced the mob

'This is the obvious moment for annihilation," I thought to myself, "I wonder why I'm not afraid"

I was waiting in momentary expectation of death, but at the same time I could not realise that we were going to be killed. I did not seem to be able to take in what being killed was; I felt very indifferent, and noticed that I had lost a button off my coat. But the crowd made way for us, and we sauntered back. Farther down we met Hassan

"What is all this crowd about?" he said

X told him, he made no answer, and we walked on together

We got outside the gates of the town, but were still a few minutes' walk from the river

"I'm tired," said X, "let's rest here a minute," and she lay down on the ground

I looked round. There was still a noisy crowd at the gates of the town, and we were being followed out by some of the rowdier members. I had a vague idea that it would have been more comfortable to be down on the raft, but there was no accounting for tastes, and it was all in

the day's work. I sat down beside X. Ali looked uneasily at the crowd beginning to straggle out towards us, and begged us to come on.

We hoarded the raft and pushed off. It was a lovely calm evening. The current was straight enough for us to glide quietly along with no assistance from the oars; the last traces of the setting sun slowly disappeared, and gradually the stars reflected twinkling points of silver in the black water, dancing brightly in the moving current. A silence as of death reigned over everything; the blackness of death peered out of the deep waters. And with it there was a tremendous sense of stillness and peace.

I was sitting very near the edge, looking into the dark waters.

"I don't want to die yet," I said.

"You are such a time taking things in," said X, "that you would not be aware that you were dead until so long after the event that it would hardly matter to you. You weren't afraid, were you?"

"No," I answered. We were silent for a while; then Hassan spoke.

"If you had crossed the chain," he said, "there would have been no more Pashas for me to travel with. Inside is the tomb of the last

baskets of town refuse to empty, the same spot served for both purposes. The Eastern has an overwhelming love for fresh water: he drinks it, he sings to it, he worships it, he makes an emblem of it, and yet he makes the town rubbish heap and the town watering place one and the same spot.

A nearly naked child sprawled about amongst the dirt and rubbish, unearthing hidden treasures in the form of bright tin lids. The mules strayed about at the water's muddy edge, putting in a drink on their own account whilst their masters, having emptied the loads, filled waterkins for the return journey.

A big, lumbering sailing boat was being unloaded just below me, the men swung themselves to and fro together as they pitched heavy bales overboard.

"Allah, Allāh, Allah," they sang out as they swung. Round their heads circled and swooped white gulls talking of the sea.

And now, through the distant broken bridge, clumsily floating down the current, came our raft, square and stubborn amongst the twirling, swiftly paddled goufas. Like a great, uncertain, bewildered animal, turning now this way and now that, guided by the unwieldy poplar poles, it lurched up the watering place and stuck on the rubbish heap.

From every corner of the narrow, winding

street sprang out half clothed, jehhering Arah forms, gesticulating, fighting, jostling, they proffered their services in the task of unloading

In a few moments all our belongings were removed—the cooking pots, the rugs, the beds, all the personal requirements which had made it into our home for so many weeks. Stripped and deserted, looking almost ashamed of itself, it lay there in all its naked clumsiness. By to-morrow even this vestige of our journey will have disappeared for ever. The felt strips, the walls which have sheltered us through so many stormy nights, will be sold to the highest bidder, they will serve henceforth as carpets in some native hovel, on which the Mahomedan will kneel to say his prayers or squat to smoke his pipe. The poles and oars will go as firewood, and the skins, deflated, will return to the country we have left. Nothing will remain but the memory of it. We are glad that it is to be so, as it has been exclusively ours in the past, so will it remain ours only in the future. We made it what it was, and without us it will cease to be.

The waters gave it a farewell lap as they passed on. We had stopped, but they went hurrying on, taking with them all those mixed memories of peace and danger, of contemplation and exertion, of idleness and hurry, which they,

and they only, had shared with us. They had borne us from the wilds and fastnesses of the unconquered East to the gateway of the Western invasion, through the dreariness and desolation of desert lands, through the magnificent isolation of gorgeous mountain scenery, past the ruined evidences of ancient civilisations still

lived by the persistence of squalid tribal huts, now, having deposited us to draw our own conclusions in this decayed city, they hurried on, lapping scornfully in their course at the white steam launch of H M British Vice Consulate

Impartially, as they had borne us up, so down here they bore up alike the brass trinkets shipped in their thousands from Manchester, the emissary of the British and Foreign Bible Society, the golf clubs and society papers for the English Club, and with an indescribable roar, as of grim laughter, rushed headlong into the salt blue waters of the Persian Gulf, where, surrendering irretrievably their own bounded individuality, they merged themselves in the larger life of the untrammelled Eastern seas

THE END

water, climbed the bank, shook himself unconcernedly, and started to browse the withered grass. Then everybody disappeared behind sandy hullocks, the goufa floated past us, and we were once more left alone with the wind and the rat.

Towards sunset we made a start again, and floated on most of the night. Small mud villages and plantations of palms and orange trees were scattered thickly on each side of the river. We seemed to be quite close to Baghdad; gilded domes and minarets stood up on the skyline above confused masses of flat-topped houses and groups of palm trees. But all the morning we wound slowly round and round endless loops of the river and hardly seemed to get any nearer to our destination. The banks now teemed with life. goufas shot across past us from one bank to another with mixed consignments of men and animals: mules plodded up and down drawing skins of water over windlasses; groups of Arabs lay about on the sunny banks and shouted inquiries at the raftsmen as we passed. The houses, which looked more substantial than the mud hovels which we had seen higher up the river, were surrounded by high walls enclosing shady orange gardens. Finally we hove in sight of the bridge of boats which guards the entrance to the town, and ran into the

shore just above it. The bridge, we learnt, had to be broken down before the raft could pass through, and as this seemed likely to take some hours, we landed and drove to the Babylon Hotel.

Baghdad is usually approached by the Persian Gulf as far as Busra, and from thence by the weekly mail steamer, it contains, therefore, certain concessions to the ideas of occasional European agents and commercial travellers. The Babylon Hotel is one of these concessions. There was a dining room hung all round with the framed advertisements of various wine and spirit merchants whose names, strangely familiar, mocked us from the wall as a first greeting from the borders of civilisation. Hassan stood in the middle of the room and gazed at them open mouthed. These were to him English works of art, decorations of great English houses, in keeping with the gaudily covered chairs and meaningless glass ornaments.

The hotel was built, like all the better modern houses, along the banks of the river, with overhanging balconies. I escaped from the evidences of Western vulgarity, and leant over the rail of the balcony. Just beneath, on one side, the narrow street which led to the hotel was continued past it down to the shore, and here came an incessant stream of natives—women with waterskins to fill and men with mules carrying